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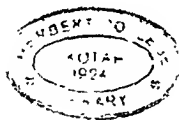
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# DANGER SPOTS OF EUROPE

BERNARD NEWMAN



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## INTRODUCTION

THE historian of the future is certain to class 1939 as of outstanding importance, particularly so far as Britain is concerned. The eventful year has seen two fundamental changes in British policy—a complicated series of Continental “entanglements” which would have appalled any previous generation of statesmen, and the imposition of conscription in times of peace. It is significant that, so far as the first of these is concerned, scarcely a contrary voice has been raised. Indeed, no British foreign policy since the days of Napoleon has ever commanded such widespread approval. It was not a policy of our own choosing: it was forced upon us, without option. We were in the position of Martin Luther at Wittenberg: “Here I stand: I can no other.”

No one pretends that our present course of action offers a cure for the maladies of Europe. The Prime Minister has appropriately referred to it as first-aid treatment: maybe it is more than that—decisive measures to stop the spread of a dreadful fever. If our efforts are pursued with the energy of their initial stages, we ought to be able to stay the infection. But we still have to deal with the original cause of the disease—the faulty drains which prompted the fever. There is no permanent safety in the present state of armed truce.

Herr Hitler made a speech recently which was full of illogical deductions based upon faulty information. Yet one phrase caused some anxious thinking; he sought to justify his use of force with the complaint that the

democracies had talked about the grievances of Europe for fifteen years, but had done nothing. There are very few thinking people in Britain who have never harboured uneasy feelings that there were problems in Europe which could and should have been firmly faced: instead, they were simply postponed—until now their solution is more difficult than it was, because of the atmosphere of force and unrest which dominates Europe.

These problems have still to be tackled: there can be no permanent peace in Europe until they are solved. It is true that this is no moment for concessions; when you are threatened by brute force, a concession becomes a bribe, and an incentive for further demands. The restoration of confidence is the first requisite to a general settlement. Suppose Hitler were to make to-morrow a perfectly fair and reasonable offer: would you believe him?

With Europe threatened by a dominant force, our obvious and only immediate policy was to build up a combination of greater force, so that aggressors should think more than twice before they attacked again. Even if we have succeeded in doing this, we can only anticipate a period of continuous disquiet, a war of nerves and economics: here, surely, we stand on firm ground. If we do, then war is unlikely. After a period of peace under armed guard, the tension is likely to relax—the nations of Europe cannot glower at one another for ever. This will be the signal for the generation of a new confidence: one territorial problem solved by negotiation and not by ultimatum is the sign we await. Our guarantees to threatened countries are explicit: we will defend them against aggression—but at no time do we preclude conciliation and reason.

In the meantime, we ought to do some hard thinking about the original ills of Europe: we ought to do this while the balance of power is in our favour. It is a sign of weakness to give something away under threat of force, but it is



a sign of strength to give something away when you are strong. In this book I have sketched one aspect of some of Europe's problems: the territorial aspect, which is perhaps more important than all others, since it is closely allied with national pride.

I have added sections to bring the book up-to-date, but (if only to avoid the charge of being wise after the event) the book in the main has been re-printed exactly as first published, some paragraphs having now been put in the past tense. The seizure of Czechoslovakia solved no problems: it merely complicated them. The principles involved, and the background of information, are unchanged.

Harrow.

B.N.



## CHAPTER I

### APPROACH TO DANGER

#### I

**T**HIS book is intended for that important but elusive person, the Man-in-the-Street. He is the person most vitally concerned with the problems of Europe—he may not know it, but he is. European problems, allowed beyond control, have a habit of leading to war. The Man-in-the-Street, if he is under forty, will have the privilege of fighting and dying in the next war—he stands quite a good chance of dying, even if he does not fight. So does the man over forty, who will lead a strange life of compromise between soldier and civilian. And, whatever his age, the Man-in-the-Street will have the pleasure of paying for the next war, as he is still paying for the last. On the excellent principle of pay-the-piper, call-the-tune, therefore, he is entitled to know what the next war is likely to be about. (It is unnecessary in these days to suggest that the responsibilities and interests of his wife are as large and serious as those of the Man himself.)

My outstanding trouble in tackling this book is that the subject is so vast. It would be difficult to put down my thumb on any corner of the map of Europe without covering at least one danger spot. Had I been writing a few years ago, would I have thought of including Spain among Europe's Danger Spots? Spain, tucked away behind the Pyrenees, free from foreign complications, anxious to solve its own problems in its own way—who would have pictured Spain as a potential cause of European war? As so<sup>at</sup>

formality, and was uttered with less meaning than our "Good morning." Riding about Germany in the autumn of 1937, I was delighted to notice the re-awakening of the German sense of humour. (It is quite a mistake to believe that the Germans have no sense of humour. Every nation varies in its outlook on the comic, but German humour is very deep and very sincere, akin to the Scottish, with an occasional leavening of primitive horseplay. It never disappeared from Germany even in the darkest days. In recent years it has merely been suppressed.) General (now Field Marshal) Göring has always been the butt of funny stories—he may be Prime Minister of Prussia, but he is Prime Minister of Mirth for the entire Reich. Now, however, Germans were telling funny stories about Hitler himself—an unspeakable sacrilege five years ago.

I tried to gauge how the regime would react to this easing of tension—this lowering of the Nazi idea from a religious creed to a political doctrine. If it ignored the tendency towards normality, it might find that its highest flights of passionate words would fail to bring response. If it realized the potentialities of the situation, it might decide that some dramatic coup would be necessary to re-fire the patriotic ardour of Germany. It is obvious that the potentialities of the lowering of domestic tension *were* realized, and the dramatic incorporation of Austria replaced the Nazi creed on its original pitch of fervour. The reception of the Czechoslovak coup was, however, lukewarm.

Germany can never be far removed from the centre of the stage, that is certain. Nevertheless, I suggest another approach to consideration of the problem. Europe is to-day a vast armed camp: or, if you will, a vast powder magazine. The situation is uncomfortably akin to that in 1914, when Gavrilo Princip at Sarajevo struck the spark which ignited the magazine. The importance of that spark at Sarajevo is often far too heavily discounted. It is easily assumed that

if the spark had not been struck at Sarajevo, then it would have been struck somewhere else. This is by no means certain. The spark might have been delayed so long that the powder magazine got damp, and refused to ignite. Consider the fact that one of the underlying causes of the War was the make-up of the Austrian Empire, with its many subject races. It is improbable that the Empire would have survived the aged Emperor Francis Joseph—and he died in 1916! If only Princip had delayed for two years, the South Slavs might have obtained their freedom at a far lower cost than ten million human lives.

The older of my readers will remember the confusion of the day. Most of us had never heard of Sarajevo, and there were very hasty consultations of atlases to determine its position on the map. The Bosnian problem was Greek to most people, and some of the published accounts, hastily put together when the spark was struck, make fantastic reading now. My first purpose is to catalogue and examine the potential Sarajevos of Europe *to-day*, with their attendant problems. If these places can be prevented from striking the spark, then maybe the crisis will pass. After all, a powder magazine is safe enough until some madman applies a match. A gun is harmless until it goes off.

Not is my approach so shallow as it may seem: many of the Sarajevos of to-day are based on deep-rooted grievances: every major upset in Europe can be traced to them. If we can remove Europe's danger spots, the prospects for peace are a thousand times brighter than at present.

Writing myself as a Man-in-the-Street, I need hardly say that my object is not to solve the problems of Europe, but only to present them. A good many of them owe much of their importance to the fact that they have been ignored (though it is true that others are dangerous because they have been exaggerated.) Many a festering sore on the body of Europe could have been cured permanently had it been

treated when it was a mere skin-rash. Some are legacies of older maladies; others have been artificially stimulated.

One fact is immediately apparent: the consideration of Europe's Danger Spots is intimately bound with that of Treaty Revision. Look at any list of European problems—two-thirds of them are directly concerned with the Peace Treaties. Now there is no question which up to now has split parties in two as that of Treaty Revision. It is not a question of Conservatives holding one view and Socialists another—each party has been divided within itself on this vital issue. Presumably because of this, successive governments have refused to face the resultant problems, and many of them have become intensified by neglect. If our governments had said firmly (it would not have represented my own view, but I present it as a possible policy): "These treaties are sacred: not a yard of the frontiers shall be altered, not a comma of the clauses deleted, except at the expense of war with Britain"—if this had been our consistent policy, then the condition of Europe would have been vastly different to-day—for better or worse. But such has *not* been our policy. We have accepted or condoned breaches of the Treaties by default or by force, and have even negotiated amendments. That is to say, we have indicated plainly that we do *not* consider the Treaties as sacred. Consequently we cannot be surprised when the defeated powers propose to carry further amendments. They would prefer to do this with our agreement: failing this, however—and at this stage we arrive at the Danger Spots of Europe.

It is important to emphasize that a purely negative policy is not enough. Take the case of the mandated German colonies. They are scarcely mentioned in the Nazi bible, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—to Hitler they were obviously unimportant either from the point of view of economics or of national pride. Not until long after his emergence did he make the first hesitant suggestion that the colonies ought

to be returned to Germany. Up to that time millions of Germans had almost forgotten about their lost colonies—the Germans were never colonial-minded. A forceful group, true—consisting mainly of ex-officials of the colonies—kept up an enthusiastic propaganda, but it would be absurd to contest that there was any overwhelming popular enthusiasm.

Hitler's first pronouncement about colonies was restrained enough—he was evidently feeling his way—flying a kite, if you will. For the results of his demand he watched London, not Berlin—it would be easy to whip up a demand in Germany at the appropriate moment. The reactions of London appeared favourable enough. A member of Parliament asked the inevitable question, and received the diplomatically accurate reply that the Government was not considering the transfer of any of its mandates.

Now one of the weaknesses of diplomatic language is that it is used universally, irrespective of the mentality of the people concerned. A brusque reply to a French communiqué would be taken as a deadly insult by the French people, who appreciate the delicacy of language. The Germans have never claimed such a national trait. Like ourselves, they can stand up to plain speaking. My own opinion is that, assuming that our policy was definitely to decline the return of the colonies, it would have been better to have said so then in plain, unmistakable terms. I am convinced that we should then have heard little more of colonial demands—war with Britain was the last thing the Nazis wanted, and there were plenty of more urgent problems nearer home. A creed based on energy cannot survive failures, and does not care to risk them. If its kite meets a strong head-wind, it is promptly hauled down and flown somewhere else.

There was no need to haul down the colonial kite. It was not stated categorically that at no time and under no

circumstances would Britain consider return of the lost colonies. Therefore, argued Berlin, at some time and in certain circumstances Britain may—will—consider their return. Thus the national appetite was stimulated, since the first obvious circumstance is a unanimous German demand. To-day there can be no doubt about it—ninety per cent of the Germans firmly believe that they were cheated of their colonies, and that it is no more than their just right that they should be returned.

The situation differs vastly from the day when Hitler flew his first kite. To-day it is a matter of national honour, a demand which can never be retracted. It is understood that my argument has nothing to do with the rights or wrongs of the colonial case, but only shows that the question has to be considered. We can still make our decision in two ways: we can admit the German claim in whole or in part, or we can give a definite "no." But whereas a definite "no" would have been accepted five years ago, to-day it would only lead to an aggravation of national passion.

(Incidentally, it was a grave error of judgment on the part of some protagonists, to argue against the return of the colonies by painting lurid pictures of the Germans as brutal colonists. A straightforward statement would at least have been understood—that we had no mind to hand back potential strategic bases and naval depots, which might cripple us in the event of war. The "brutality" argument naturally never convinced a single German: on the contrary, it was fine ammunition for the propaganda campaign. Since that time the Germans have retaliated by seizing on all our own colonial difficulties, and exaggerating them beyond recognition—the execution of a Palestine murderer becomes "brutal oppression." In such fashion is bad blood fostered between nations.)

One of the few positive things I have to say in this book is this: That, whether we like it or not, we *must* face the



problem of Treaty Revision in the not too abstract future. Already the man-in-the-street appreciates the difference in principle in the absorption of Austria and the Sudetenland in the Reich, and the brutal seizure of Czechoslovakia. Ideas on this point have changed vastly within the past few months, and British public opinion has now reached the stage when it is ready to consider what is involved by Treaty Revision.

For in some ways the situation is perhaps more appalling than it seems. The Man-in-the-Street is facing a tragedy—an ironic tragedy without parallel in world history. For, short of a drastic change in international outlook, *the cause or the provocation of the next war will be found in the Treaties of Peace which concluded the last.*

Europe to-day is not one armed camp but two—representing, roughly, the Revisionist and Anti-Revisionist Powers: it is not an accident that the line of cleavage between Fascist and Democratic Powers generally follows the same frontiers. The Revisionist group, quite naturally, consists of those countries who were defeated in the last war, and who consider that they were unfairly treated after their surrender. On this side appears Italy, who considered herself cheated at the peace. For many years the problem of revision has been simmering; it has now come to a head. When it does, it can be tackled by one of two methods, (a) Peace, (b) War. We have left it late, but there is still time for (a).

Make no mistake about it, this is no simple problem. (Any reader who imagines that Treaty Revision is straightforward or easy is recommended to turn at once to the chapter on Hungary.) For the last twelve years I have spent every spare week astride the disputed frontiers, studying their problems on the spot. The more I have seen (as might be expected), the more I have been dismayed by their intricacies. *Yet they are not insoluble.* The difficulty is to



approach them free from the passion of propaganda and nationalist bias.

That is my only claim to consideration—I have tried to present the problems of revision without bias. It is difficult, but I have tried; if there is bias—for I am human—then at least it is unintentional.

My book has at least one considerable virtue—it is not subsidized by interested parties. Quite half of the books published on the subject of European problems are subsidized by countries directly concerned. I suppose it is legitimate that a country should be able to hire a British author to present its case to Britain. One gets something of a shock, however, to see the names of well-known writers on title pages, and to find that the books have been commissioned—not by a publisher, but a foreign press bureau.

It may be assumed that the book does represent the real views of the writer, but as he is paid a few hundred pounds by the government concerned, his judgment is naturally prejudiced. There is one author who must be known in almost every European embassy or legation in London—and he is a good business man as well as a clever writer. It is of course quite easy to distinguish books so produced. They are so violently one-sided; and there is no European problem which is one-sided—indeed, the trouble is that most of them have two (or more), perfectly legitimate sides. Fortunately, the British public is not so gullible as directors of propaganda imagine, and these books are generally recognized for what they are. They usually get their best circulation from the press department of the embassy or legation concerned, handed out free to any one who cares to read them.

There are, of course, a large number of books which deal very properly with the problems of Europe. Their authors may take sides, but they do so with conviction—and they do at least present the other point of view. The

trouble with most of them is that they are specialist productions, covering their particular problems in great detail. My own contribution is intended as a sort of general primer to these learned treatises. The Man-in-the-Street, I imagine, will first want to study the broad outlines of the problem.

I have tried to present these simply. This is intensely difficult, for over-simplification can be just as misleading as over-statement. I warn the reader that my book will not be nearly so exciting and sensational as the first category of books I mentioned. It is easy to be exciting when you take one side of the case only, and exaggerate causes and effects: excitement *is* exaggeration.

It would have defeated my object had I adopted a common method—seized on a series of dramatic incidents which might or might not have meant anything, which might be either causes or effects, and had built a sensational story upon their basis. My object being to present dangerous problems in such fashion as might lead towards a solution, sensationalism is the last method I ought to employ.

I did not collect my basic information and impressions sensationally. I wandered the disputed areas alone, in simple fashion, either on foot or on a humble bicycle. I have visited in turn practically every one of Europe's new frontiers; I have been more concerned with the views of the peasants than the politicians. I have been legitimately fed with "information" by the press bureaux of twenty-six European countries, but there is no danger in being "plugged" so long as you know that it is being done.

Most of my opinions, however, have been formed on the spot. They have been founded largely on the happiness or misery of the people concerned. They have been more influenced by the welfare of the people living to-day than of those long dead. Nevertheless, I do not ask you to accept my opinions, which may or may not have any

value. I offer the groundwork for a study of Europe's Danger Spots, on which your own opinion may be based.

It has been a fascinating business, gathering the material for this book. Despite occasional moments of despondency and gloom, it has proved of overwhelming interest. I recall straightforward investigations in Alsace-Lorraine, in the Polish Corridor; I recall more intriguing moments—a night in a “vampire”-haunted village in Transylvania, scenes of massacre in the Dobrudja, days with cowboys on the Hungarian plain, vivid hours with Albanian irregulars, torture and death in Macedonia, strange moments on the “Forbidden Frontier.”

Nor was my amateur investigation without its humours—in Roumania, for example, I was arrested on an average three times a day!

For a total of two years in the last twelve, then, I have concerned myself with the practical problems of Europe. If I need an excuse, I find it in this: if G. D. H. and M. Cole can find relaxation from the study of international affairs in the writing of thrillers, then I am entitled to find relaxation from the writing of thrillers in the study of international affairs.

## II

So far as the Danger Spots of Europe are entangled with the Peace Treaties, I propose to confine myself entirely to the question of the revision of their territorial clauses. The reason is simple. The other clauses have revised themselves! The financial clauses were the first casualties (if you exclude such oddities as the trial of the Kaiser and his fellow “criminals”), the armament clauses the latest. The territorial clauses, in fact, are the only sections of the Treaties which are still almost intact. They were always the most potentially dangerous. Germany could refuse to pay extravagant reparations, could even

re-arm, without causing actual strife, since these things are internal. But the moment a German soldier sets foot in the Polish Corridor, then the balloon goes up.

The attitude of the Anti-Revisionist Powers, headed by France, is simple and clear. "Not a yard, not a comma" of the Treaties must be altered. (The collapse of the clauses other than territorial is tacitly ignored.) However legitimate this attitude may seem, its implications are equally simple and clear. The future of Europe will be settled either in the conference room or on the battlefield. The simple and clear "not a yard, not a comma" attitude leads direct to the battlefield—to-day. Had it been adopted by *all* interested Powers from 1919 onwards, that might have led to different results!

The Anti-Revisionist Powers assume that the Treaties are perfect, the last word in the ethnic distribution of Europe. The authors of the Treaties had no such illusions. Article 19 of the League of Nations' Covenant (which was incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles), reads: "The Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of Treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions which might endanger the peace of the world." With Europe divided into two armed camps, one of those times has surely arrived.

But if we recognize that the attitude of France and her friends has not always been helpful, this does not imply recognition of the Revisionist claims. Many of these are wildly extravagant—presumably on the bargaining principle of demanding far more than you expect to get. Fostered by their propaganda, an illusory legend has grown about the origin of the Treaties. We get the impression that the men who gathered at Paris in 1919 to make the peace were either a pack of incompetent fools, or a gang of revengeful jingos, or both. This idea is utterly absurd. The statesmen

of the world who gathered at Paris by were no means inferior to their prototypes of earlier days; they had on their extensive staffs a wealth of intellect and knowledge such as was never before assembled. So far from the casual settlement of frontiers so commonly pictured, they were revised after long study by men who knew their problems thoroughly. The result of their labours, moreover, represented the best ethnic division of territory Europe has ever known in its history—not perfect, but infinitely nearer to ethnic perfection than that of 1914. *More people now live under the rule of their own kin than ever did before.* The Treaties, in fact, were an honest attempt to re-draw the map of Europe on lines of justice and freedom—an attempt which, in spite of the many difficulties and mistakes, achieved considerable success.

No one expected the Treaties to be free from blemish—their authors least of all. Of the "Big Three," President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George, to their credit, admitted error as the passing of the years found out the weak spots. Clemenceau, of course, was not concerned with admitting error, but only with punishing Germany. General Smuts, with his usual uncanny foresight in international affairs, declared almost on the day of Versailles: "I have signed the Treaty, not because it is a perfect Treaty, but because it was necessary to end the War." In face of such opinions and of obvious facts, the French attitude becomes rather stupid.

The Anti-Revisionist mind refuses to consider the cession of a yard of territory on the grounds that if you give a yard *you must give a mile.* This is certainly a forcible argument, but a lot depends upon how the yard is given. Comparatively, the question of revision is one of yards, as we shall see. There was no conspiracy of folly or revenge at Paris: there were many frontier problems, however, which were so complicated as to admit of two solutions. In such cases

the verdict was usually in favour of the victors: this was only human. It is these cases, or some of them, which call for consideration. The areas involved are not of tremendous importance economically, but they matter a great deal to national pride. The Anti-Revisionist Powers would be foolish to ignore them. To-day, in the conference room, the gift of a yard may solve a problem in perpetuity; in battle the enemy will certainly demand the mile. None of the problems of Europe's Danger Spots can ever be settled by war. If the Anti-Revisionist Powers won again, then the problem would be continued and augmented. If the Revisionist Powers won, it is certain that the scale of "justice" would be swung so far over on the other side that a new set of equivalent problems would be born.

### III

There is a good deal of airy talk in both Revisionist and Anti-Revisionist circles about "national frontiers." There isn't any such thing. A European frontier is supposed speaking generally, to mark out a line where one race ends and another begins. It is impossible to point to a single existing frontier on the European Continent, or to suggest a single possible frontier, which would satisfy this condition.

There are three types of frontier line. There is the historic boundary, which came into being after age-old turmoils in which neither science nor reason played any part. A suitable example is the frontier between France and Belgium—which was that of France and the Spanish Netherlands. How many British soldiers knew when they stepped from France into Belgium? The boundary is purely artificial, running across cornfields and through the middle of villages. It was determined centuries ago, on the basis of the land holdings of border nobles, and is no more than a political division.

Then there is the "natural" frontier, which every country

claims: all satiated countries proclaim that their present boundaries are "natural." A range of mountains, a mighty river—here, we are told, is the perfect geographical division, a real separation of races. The most potent example, invariably quoted, is that of the Pyrenees. Certainly, on the map, here is the perfect "natural" frontier, stretching obligingly from Atlantic to Mediterranean, separating Frenchmen from Spaniards. This is a complete fallacy. It is not even true that every dweller to the north of the Pyrenean watershed is even politically a Frenchman, and he to the south a Spaniard, for the frontier zigzags haphazardly along the range. At Roncesvalles, Spain reaches down into the French valleys, and in the Cerdagne a great area of physical Spain is under French rule. But this is by no means all. So far from separating men, the Pyrenees form the backbone of two races which are neither French nor Spanish! For thirty miles to the north and a hundred miles to the south of the Western and Eastern Pyrenees respectively stretch the lands of the Basque and the Catalan—vigorous races, each with its own language and culture. So far from being a "natural" division, therefore, the Pyrenees act as a binder of racial interests and development.

A river is even less complete as a frontier. When the settling tribes of old found green pastures on one side of a river valley, they did not halt—they occupied the other side of the valley as well. Rivers never were real frontiers, but rather veins around which racial bodies grew. You will not find a solitary river of Europe which has the slightest claim to be called a boundary between races.

Nor is language a decisive factor in frontier determination. It does not follow automatically that a country has a right to claim as its citizens those who speak its language. If so, Switzerland would be immediately divided between France, Germany and Italy. Germany would also occupy Holland and part of Belgium, Spain would demand the

greater part of South America, and Britain would claim to rule the United States! (Or, of course, the United States might claim to rule Britain!) A common language may be meaningless as an ethnic guide—there are countless cases of the forced change of language of subject peoples. H. G. Wells once said that a common language was not evidence of a common past, but of a common future—but there are millions of people in Europe who would never agree.

Historic, as well as geographic, ethnic, and economic, considerations must be given full weight in determining a frontier; the wishes of a people, as developed through history, provide an important—almost overwhelming—factor. The language frontiers of Europe often differ very considerably from political lines, but it does not follow for a moment that they are advisable; in fact, their adoption would lead to hopeless confusion, even assuming that the peoples in question could even be induced to the experiment.

Yet, although the “natural” frontier does not and cannot exist, we must have boundaries—at present, at all events. In a few centuries’ time our descendants will laugh at our comic maps of Europe—just as some Europeans laugh at the long straight frontier between U.S.A. and Canada, a line which is considerably more settled than Europe’s twisting curves! Since we must have frontiers, therefore, we must do the best we can.

No war can ever settle a frontier. For a frontier is a compromise—it has to be a compromise. When the many tribes of Europe settled down, they did so indiscriminately—they had no thought for modern political conditions. They intermarried and raided freely among neighbouring tribes. Consequently, on any land frontier you inevitably find a mixed race—mixed in two senses. Along both sides of the French-Italian frontier, for example, you will find thousands of people of mixed French-Italian parentage;



you will also find thousands of Frenchmen living inside Italy, and thousands of Italians living inside France. Sometimes these families have been there for so many generations that the French have forgotten they ever were French.

In Eastern Europe the medley of races is more pronounced. And here we approach an important axiom: *it is quite impossible, however hard you try, to draw a line and say (for example): "All the people to the west of this line are Germans, all those to the east are Poles."* It is utterly impossible, although your frontier may have ten thousand wobbles. You must compromise, to arrange a frontier that will inflict the least possible hardship and injustice.

Nor, of course, are ethnic considerations the only concern in determining a frontier. The accidents of history, the vagaries of geography, the demands of economies—all these have played a part in the demarcation of frontiers which have successfully endured for many generations, although they may not follow an ethnic line.

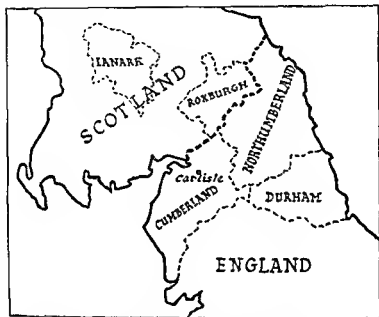
At this stage I would like to put a few purely hypothetical cases. If I plunge you, say, into the frontier problems of Poland and Germany, your judgments might be coloured by your like or dislike of one or the other. You may decide for Poland not on the merits of the case, but because you don't like Hitler. Your bias would not be conscious—that is the trouble. I found this to be one of my own difficulties. Variations of my imaginative problems occur a hundred times throughout Europe; decisions on the problems on their merits, rather than of pride or passion, may prove helpful.

Instead of calling the two countries A and B, which could become very confusing, let us call them England and Scotland. Let us assume that the frontier is as at present, but that they are two entirely independent sovereign States, but with no political dependence whatsoever: each with its own rulers, parliaments, army and economic

system; we will imagine, indeed, that the conditions of 1500 have been projected to 1939.

*Problem A.*

Ought people living in areas contiguous to that of their own race to be incorporated within the political system of that race? Have they the right to be incorporated?



Roxburgh is in Scotland. But, we will assume, it is almost entirely populated by Englishmen, who outnumber the Scots by four to one. It became a Scottish possession by one of the accidents of history—say, a second Bannockburn. Through the centuries the English in Roxburgh have preserved their native character, culture and language. They have little in common with the Scots, a foreign race; they have never settled down under Scottish rule, have been

maltreated accordingly, and are desperately anxious to be re-united with England. Their plight is a constant source of friction between the two countries. Have they a moral right to demand re-union with their fellows and liberation from foreign rule? *Should every other means fail, is England justified in going to war to free her kinsmen?*

Please consider this problem, which is not so simple as it seems, under three heads: (1) Assume that Roxburgh is a semi-barren country, of no great economic value, and would be no great loss to Scotland. (2) Assume that Roxburgh contains the only iron mines in Scotland, and that its cession to England would be an economic disaster. (3) Assume that Central Scotland is entirely mountainous, and that the only natural communication from east to west lies through the Roxburgh lowlands—if it were given up to England, main rail and road communications would be severed.

If my problem seems hopelessly fantastic, turn to England and Wales, with Monmouth as the disputed county. If England and Wales were separate States, Monmouth *would* be a disputed county.

*Problem B.*

*(Each of these problems is separate, of course—forget the Roxburgh assumption in considering this.)*

Frontiers, as we have seen, house a medley of races. Take the (imaginary) case of Cumberland. Its population is 200,000, of which half are English, and half Scottish. Normally it might be possible to draw a boundary half-way across the county of a give and take basis, but the accidents of history have decreed otherwise. The Scots of Cumberland are a race of peasant crofters, and are almost entirely confined to the rural districts. The English, on the other hand, settled almost exclusively in Carlisle, the county town, where they established prosperous manufacturs. The county is a reasonably balanced whole—the Scottish country

districts provide the food for the English county town, which by its exports of manufactures to other parts of the country supplies the wherewithal for the purchases other than food.

It would be economic folly to separate county from county town—bankruptcy for one would follow almost automatically. Scotland claims the whole county since the 100,000 Scots occupy practically the whole of its area. England claims the whole county because the 100,000 Englishmen occupy the town, as important as the rest of the county put together; alternatively, she claims the town because it is indisputably English, and the county because it is essential for the provisioning of the town. In any case, once England's claim to the town is admitted, it is argued, elementary geographic reasons compel the county to accept the fate of the town.

Consider this problem also from two points of view: (1) Suppose Cumberland is at present included in England, and is now claimed by Scotland; (2) vice versa.

(Englishmen and Scotsmen must, of course, subdue any natural national bias in solving those problems. In case of difficulty let the two countries be A and B. Or consider the problems both ways—i.e., suppose the country district were English and the town Scottish.)

The obvious and easy answer will not meet the case. It is not enough to say: "There need be no problem at all. With a little tolerance on either side, it does not matter very much whether Cumberland belongs to England or Scotland." This answer will not do, unfortunately. There *is* a problem—but there is no tolerance. On the contrary, the two countries were engaged only twenty years ago in a long and bitter war.

Consider another possibility arising from this problem. The county is in Scottish hands. But a fanatical English patriot is haunted by the spectacle of Carlisle, an historic

English city, under foreign rule. Gathering a band of armed irregulars, he marches into Cumberland, seizes Carlisle, and holds it. Is he justified in making this raid? If not, should he be tried for murder on account of the casualties he has caused?

*Problem C.*

In medieval days the Scottish border knights were determined raiders. In one of their drives to the south a group of these knights penetrated into Durham. They fell in love with its beauties and fertilities, and decided to settle in it—there were too many knights in Scotland, anyway. Accordingly they sent back to Scotland for all their friends, relations and servants. A fair proportion of the English inhabitants were massacred, because they refused to accept the Scottish form of Christianity, and the remainder became serfs. The English serf class gradually died out—partly by escape to English counties, and partly by absorption and intermarriage with Scottish servants.

The Scottish knights never settled in Northumberland, which somehow did not attract them. For one short period Northumberland was, indeed, a part of Scotland, but a reversal of the fortune of war restored it to England, to which it ethnically belonged.

The position to-day is, therefore, that Durham is an indisputably Scottish county, separated from Scotland by Northumberland, which is just as indisputably English. The Scots, however, are very dissatisfied. They claim that it is out of all reason that a portion of Scotland should be artificially separated from its motherland. Trade is difficult, and defence impossible. Further, the situation is a severe irritant to national pride—the very sight of the map is provocative. The English reply is simple: Northumberland is English, and cannot be separated from England. Why should Northumberland be incorporated into Scotland

merely to join up Scotland and Durham? The difficulties of trade are greatly exaggerated—ample train facilities are placed at the Scottish disposal, and, in any case, free communication by sea is possible. Durham, in fact, is to be considered as a Scottish island, the greater part of which is bordered by English territory instead of the sea.

The question is, of course, to decide a just solution. The present situation is potentially dangerous, for the detached county is certainly offending the Scottish national pride. Has Scotland a real right to demand the cession by the English of Northumberland? Alternatively, imagine the position reversed; Northumberland *has* for some time been held by Scotland, but England emphatically demands the return of the lost province. Is her demand just?

(Again, as an alternative, consider England and Wales as separate states, and Pembroke—that “little England beyond Wales”—claimed by England.)

#### *Problem D.*

The English, too, had their border raiders, who on occasion penetrated far into Scotland. Some of them settled in Lanarkshire, which gradually assumed an English character; to-day Lanark is overwhelmingly English—an English island in Scotland. This problem is obviously more difficult than the previous ones. Lanark is not contiguous to the present frontier, nor is it accessible by open sea. What is to happen to the county?

#### *Problem E.*

The border counties of Cumberland and Northumberland were conquered centuries ago by Scottish knights. These gentlemen, for some unknown reason, departed from the custom of their times and failed to massacre the inhabitants, whom they retained as labourers. The district, immune from industrialization and “progress,” is com-

paratively "backward." The Scottish squires are well educated, but have withheld the benefits of education from their labourers, few of whom can even read or write. The entire wealthy class of the counties is Scottish. This, however, comprises only about one-twentieth of the population, which controls the wealth, labour and life of the district. But they are hopelessly outnumbered—nineteen to one—by the illiterate English. How should the counties be allocated—to Scotland or to England? Is either country justified in going to war to "free" its nationals from a foreign yoke?

#### *Problem F.*

The Thames is the river of England. It runs through the heart of the Midlands (we will assume), and joins up with its present course near Oxford. For two hundred miles it is navigable for small steamers of the coastal type.

But three hundred years ago many thousands of French Huguenots fled from France and found a refuge in England. They settled in the south of Essex and the north of Kent. Forming a homogeneous settlement, their territories were claimed by France after a successful war. Thus British ships sailing down the Thames have to pass through foreign waters to gain the open sea, and London's natural port—Tilbury—is in foreign hands. The French territories, let it be emphasized, are definitely French. Yet, has a foreign community the right to block the entrance to the mouth of the river which is the main artery of England?

This example may seem rather far-fetched. Let us try another. The Dordogne and Garonne are rivers vastly important to Southern France. But, when the English were being driven from France, they clung desperately to Bordeaux. This important port became thoroughly anglicized, and is so to-day. Thus the vast export trade of the districts served by the Dordogne and the Garonne, has to

pass through the English port of Bordeaux. Has France a legitimate claim to the possession of the port?

#### IV

These problems have been stated in their simplest terms, and their actual counterparts in Europe are vastly more complicated. Yet that is no reason to throw up our hands in despair. The defeated and disappointed Powers have given notice that the treaties imposed upon them are no longer valid; it is pleasant to talk about the sanctity of treaties, but it is regrettably true that if two countries make a treaty, and one breaks it, then it is no longer a treaty. Germany and her friends have already taken certain steps to revise the treaties: the first steps were internal, but with the occupation of Austria the problem reached a different stage. It has been made quite clear that if what they consider their just demands are not met, then the method of force may not be ultimately withheld. We do not want to resort to force: what then are we to do?

The automatic suggestion is to call a world or European conference to consider the urgent problems of Europe. I can imagine no surer method of precipitating a European war. In the atmosphere of to-day the clash of demand and denial would be fatal. The success of a conference depends upon the aptness of its hour and the quality of its preliminary preparation. An unprepared conference to-day would be a disaster.

No major agreement can be signed with any confidence for some time to come. During the last year so many treaties have been torn up, so many agreements broken the day after they were made, that nations are naturally suspicious. It is useless to sign treaties unless there is confidence behind the signature, and it is idle to pretend that international covenants are as sacred to-day as they ought to be.



It is equally idle to suppose that the diseases of Europe can be solved by one simple prescription. Much to my regret, I barred the one obvious solution in our examination of hypothetical cases—toleration. In the long run toleration, confidence, mutual trust, co-operation—these are the only things which can give Europe uninterrupted peace, and no effort of any kind should be spared which encourages their growth. Yet at the present time these admirable things are actually losing ground—there is infinitely less tolerance in Europe than there was five years ago—and there is an obvious danger of another major conflict long before the mind of Europe could be turned to thoughts of brotherhood. I confess that I have little patience with the orator who proclaims that it is only by toleration that permanent peace will come, and just leaves it at that. It may be true that the millenium will only come with the world-wide adoption of Socialism, or Christianity, or whatever else the speaker suggests, but elementary calculations show that this is likely to be a lengthy process. I do not believe in the much quoted axiom that “you can’t change human nature.” You can: at least, you can change human behaviour, but it takes a long time. But I am not content to sit down and wait for a miracle. The conditions under which my grandchildren will live are of some importance to me, but infinitely more important are those under which I may live the remaining half of my life.

We have to move forward, positively: yet a reckless step may mean disaster. I suggest a more calculated and deliberate gait. At the moment the nations of Europe are preparing for war, proclaiming at the same time that they all want peace. Let us take them at their word—for a limited period. We could suggest a *status quo* for five years: at the end of that time we could promise a re-consideration of the problems of Europe. All present frontiers would be respected for the period, and all external propaganda

must cease. It would be futile to suggest any form of substantial disarmament to-day, so we will substitute an arms "holiday"—no further constructions to be undertaken: even this would be difficult enough to agree!

On the main principle, however, it ought to be possible to secure agreement. If any Powers refused to subscribe to such moderate demands, it would prove that their protestations of peace were outright lies, and they would have to be treated like pariahs. It does still count if a country has the moral opinion of the world against it. Who *could* refuse to join such a pledge? Hitler was content to postpone for ten years the most vexed question of national pride about his frontiers—the Polish Corridor: and he kept his agreement for five of those years. There is nothing more immediately urgent in any of his present demands. If he is sincere in his desire for peace, better to discuss his problems in an atmosphere of confidence five years ahead than to-day, when one ill-advised move might lead to open conflict.

I have little doubt that a formula on these or similar lines, hacked by patient statesmanship on the part of the more disinterested Powers, could create the necessary atmosphere for the adoption of a pact of postponement. Then the harder part of the task would begin.

A limited pact of this kind—guaranteeing present frontiers for five years, with a promise of consideration of major territorial problems at the end of that time—might be adopted as the first step towards a revived League of Nations. It is easy and cheap to sneer at the League to-day, bumbled after its failures. Men who were weary of war expected too much of it: its geography was too vast for human comprehension. Who could expect Ecuador to be intensely interested in Siam? Its biggest failures arose not from lack of goodwill, but from sheer limitation of human outlook. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria was a clear

case of aggression, defying all the League's principles, yet few nations of the world were directly interested, and popular response was amazingly limited. Only in Britain and America was the national pulse stirred: and America was not in the League, and Britain could not move without France.

The case of Abyssinia was even more blatant. This time British public opinion was almost unanimous. A world-wide empire encourages a wide view, and to us a threat in Africa is just as important as a threat in Europe—often more so, in fact, for although we are interested in world affairs, we are not nearly so interested in European affairs—until recently. The French, on the other hand, have a very restricted world view, but are intensely interested in Europe. The blame for the Abyssinian fiasco is to-day heaped on Laval, but a substantial part of France was behind him. What did Abyssinia matter to France? it was argued. It was much more important to keep Italy on the side of France for the potential struggle against Germany.

Thus it seems that it would be as well to reconstitute the League in the first instance on a narrower territorial basis, since the minds of few men move outside their own continents, and since it is scarcely reasonable to expect Estonia to march to the aid of Liberia. A series of sub-Leagues, continent by continent, might form a better working basis for the next generation, the ideal of a world-wide League never being lost. We should have learned by now that you cannot rush these things. The grandiose conceptions of the League would have been decades nearer attainment had they evolved from more modest beginnings. The pact I suggest is modest enough, but it is a beginning.

The cessation of propaganda would bring instant relief to the atmosphere. No one who has not travelled the disputed areas can know how great are the effects of propaganda, most powerful weapon in the world. A casual

advertisement in a newspaper can induce us to smoke somebody's cigarettes, or clamour to see a certain film. Imagine then the effect of continuous and subtle propaganda, developing ideas *which we are ready to hold*, and making them seem infinitely more important than they are. It would be difficult to enforce a condition like this; but it would be in the interest of all parties to do so. Hungary, for example, would be promised consideration of her frontier claims, and the measure of her ultimate success would obviously depend on the degree of confidence engendered during the probationary period between her and her neighbours. If she continued her present campaign of propaganda, the atmosphere in 1944 would not be improved from that of to-day, and her neighbours would be no more disposed to meet her wishes.

As soon as some confidence had been restored, maybe within a year or so, local economic conferences should be held. Many of Europe's problems are natural, but they are greatly aggravated by man-made artificial economic restrictions. The accidents of history, for example, made a satisfactory demarcation of the frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary very difficult, as we shall see: but the fact that Hungary had more grain than she can sell, yet was short of manufactured articles, while Czechoslovakia was rich in manufactures and short of food—and yet impossibly high tariffs prevented natural and direct trade—could not be blamed on history or geography, but on man. The out-of-work artisan of Czechoslovakia and the bootless peasant of Hungary alike knew that something vital was wrong, and they placed the blame as directed by their leaders or their propaganda.

(Propaganda is under-estimated in Britain and America because the individualistic independence of the Man-in-the-Street refuses to be dragooned. A controlled Press on the dictatorship plan would appal him, and would lead

to rebellion rather than agreement. Any British leader who displayed his photograph on the Mussolini or Stalin scale would find that his features soon became the most hated in the land. In Britain the Labour Party Press is meagre compared with that of its opponents, yet its total vote is comparatively high. But because we tend to resist regimentation of ideas, we must not under-estimate the power of continuous suggestion over people with a different mental make-up: consider the Germans for example—a highly educated race, yet almost at the mercy of the headline and the loudspeaker.)

A series of economic agreements would do more than anything else to ease international tension. If it were possible to make them general, so much the better: but this is doubtful, for the Powers which have adopted the policy of "controlled" currency cannot trade normally. However, a temporary expedient might be found in an extension of the most primitive form of trade—barter.

At the end of the five years—or whatever the agreed period—the critical conference would assemble. There would be no question of coercion. The countries concerned in the particular problem would meet in a friendly atmosphere under the chairmanship of a neutral mutually agreed—as a chairman, not a judge.

It goes without saying that there would be many disappointments. In spite of all friendly promptings, some countries would still demand far too much, others would offer far too little—or nothing at all. But if the ground were thoroughly prepared, and the atmosphere were propitious, then some good must result. And when the time comes when any major European problems are settled by friendly collaboration, then the law of force will receive a deadly blow.

## V

How could these problems be settled? Consider Problem A—whichever way you look at it, someone is bound to be unhappy. English national pride is hurt to-day—but why should Scottish national pride be hurt by seeing a piece torn out of her historic map?

There are some frontier problems which could be settled, and others ameliorated, by comparatively minor rectifications of frontiers. In other cases the introduction of local economic privileges would make a vast difference. The most liberal interpretation of minority rights is, of course, essential in all cases.

One other idea must be mentioned—but I never imagined that my pen would present it: I am an inquirer, not a politician, so I do not dare to advocate it. For centuries the Greeks were subjects of the Turks, cruelly treated. When they regained their freedom they showed the fierce enmity which had been bred in their bones. For a hundred years Greece and Turkey glared at each other across the Aegean, and half a dozen times they were locked in combat. In the World War the Greeks were on the winning side, and as their principal share of the spoils were awarded a huge area in Asia Minor. The contention was that Smyrna was a Greek city, and that its natural hinterland—containing large numbers of Greeks—must go with it.

But the broken Turkish Power revived miraculously, and the Greek army in Asia Minor was hopelessly defeated. Tempers were primitive. Smyrna a Greek city? Very well, argued the Turks—burn it down, then it was no longer a Greek city. A million Greeks in Asia Minor? Very well—bundle them back to Greece: then there could be no question of a Greek claim.

There was no discussion. The ancestors of the Greeks of Asia Minor had lived there for dozens of generations,

but they were ruthlessly uprooted and shipped to Greece. The Greeks naturally retaliated, and all Turks in Greek territory were immediately turned out of Greece. This did not solve the problem of making room for the Asia Minor refugees, for there were only 200,000 Turks in Greece. But Greece housed many thousands of Roumanians. These—more politely—were returned to Roumania. The Roumanian Government, to make room for them, evicted thousands of Bulgars.

I saw something of the terrible scenes of those days—thousands of weeping, starving refugees, arriving in an unprepared land, suffering incredible hardships, decimated by disease. I never thought that I could even do so much as to suggest consideration of such a method. But the point is this: the Greeks and Turks, enemies for hundreds of years, are now friends and allies. During the Greek domestic crisis of 1935 it appeared as if Bulgaria might take advantage of the confusion to invade Greece. Without prompting, Turkey immediately warned Bulgaria off! Any Victorian statesmen, could they return to the European scene to-day, would stare in amazement at the sight of Greece and Turkey standing side by side, friends and allies.

Whether we like the idea or not, the system of transference of population is about to become a matter for European politics. And, of course, there is a vast difference between the sudden upheaval of a population under appalling war conditions, and the transfer of that population under friendly and prepared conditions of peace. So far back as 1919 Greece and Bulgaria exchanged thousands of families by mutual arrangement and without hardship or distress. This is perhaps a better example than the other, for the Greeks of Asia Minor were mostly traders, infinitely easier to transplant than peasants almost rooted to their native soil.

Germany has proclaimed a kind of protectorate over

Germans outside Germany—and has begun to show that this is not merely a vague expression of patriotism. Responsible spokesmen have proclaimed that the ten million Germans outside Germany will be brought into the territory of the Reich. Their idea, as it is generally understood, involves the conquest of a huge area of south-eastern Europe: yet there is another and easier way of accomplishing their ambition.

There are nearly a million Germans in Poland, and over a million Poles in Germany. There is no logical reason why their exchange should not be considered. If the present threats mean anything at all, they mean that one day Germany and Poland may be at war over this question of "outside Germans." It could be avoided, with the minimum of hardship. Spread over a period of years, with detailed preparation and friendly and efficient supervision, the exchange of a couple of million people is not a great problem. Our forefathers would have thought little of it two thousand years ago. Life to-day is more complicated, and there are hundreds of difficulties—but none of them are insuperable. The cost would be that of half a dozen battleships.

It is understood that vehement protests would come from the uprooted families: this is only natural. Yet it is far more important that hundreds of millions of people should not suffer or die, than that thousands of families should be temporarily inconvenienced. Any member of a civilized state has to do many things he does not want to do, in the interests of the community. Further, the change is not violent. This is no sudden transition of a European to the Gold Coast or South Sea Islands. In many cases it would involve a move of only ten or twenty miles—scarcely a change of scene.

France would certainly object to a German neighbour enlarged by ten million souls. But it may come to a choice



—either to plan the reunion of the German race in some similar fashion to that I have suggested, or to fight to prevent the German conquest of south-eastern Europe. Actually the figure ten million is flung about airily for propaganda purposes. There is every difference in the world between the Germans in Poland who were German citizens until 1919—and the Germans in Roumania, whose ancestors settled there two hundred or more years ago. We shall meet these people later in the book. The actual number of Germans to be “repatriated” would probably be about three million: not all of these would be exchanged, so that it must be understood that some rectification of Germany’s frontier might be necessary to re-house them.

There are few European problems which would not yield to a spirit of compromise, if the course of the next few years can be arranged so that an atmosphere of compromise becomes possible. It is folly to proclaim that war is inevitable. Nothing is inevitable. Nothing is permanent—European frontiers least of all, for they have been altered a hundred times every century. The present political situation is not permanent, nor are its creeds. Dictatorships are not permanent, for even dictators are human. The course of Balkan history was changed violently because King Alexander of Greece was bitten by a monkey, and died. France and England quarrelled, Greece lost a great province, and millions of people suffered and perished because of that monkey’s bite.

The Rome-Berlin axis is not permanent. On the contrary: it is machine-made, not hand-forged. The presence of the German troops on the Brenner pass has already given it a nasty jar. Human relationships are notoriously unreliable, and acute observers claim that there is no more than diplomatic necessity in the friendship of the dictators: as Stephen Graham said: “You can’t have two big dogs in one backyard.”

The present tension between Britain and Germany is not permanent: the hard things said about Germany to-day are almost word for word parallel with those said a hundred years ago about France, our "hereditary enemy"—and now our ally! Cool examination reveals the fact that Hitler's demands are a mixture of extravagant claims and legitimate grievances. Any judge of any nationality is quite accustomed to such cases, and they are not difficult to deal with. It may be that Hitler's extravagant demands are prompted by the fact that his legitimate grievances have been ignored.

I talked with Hitler in 1933. The fact that I appreciated his pleasant personality may mean nothing, for I certainly do not accept many of his ideas. Of his internal policy I withhold comment, but one impression I gained is important because I find that it is shared by most men who have met him—that some of Hitler's ideas are so vague as to be meaningless, others are expressions of opinion and open to discussion; but certain ideas are a religion, from which a thousand conferences would never move him, for which he would risk everything. It is not difficult for a psychologist to sort out these ideas from a careful reading of *Mein Kampf*. My own impression in 1933 was that the colonial demand was not one of his religious beliefs—but it may have become so by now: the union with Austria very definitely *was*—a goal for which no price would be too high.

Competent observers believe that Austria and Czechoslovakia were his principal goals. If so, we ought to examine his other demands, to see if there are any which can be legitimately satisfied. There is a strong school of thought, however, which holds that these were only the beginning: and it is, of course, possible that Hitler may become intoxicated with his success, and misled by its ease. We must examine the possibilities of such a conjecture, too. Above all, we ought not to wait for a monkey's bite.

## VI

Whatever our political convictions, we shall be agreed that the time has come when Britain must formulate a new policy. Hitherto our attitude has been negative—natural enough, in a satiated nation, anxious only to hold what we have in peace. Now the whole outlook has changed. We can no longer be content to meet the repercussions of the dictatorship Powers as they arise; the moment is too serious for improvisation.

For many years after the War France was the undisputed controller of Europe's foreign policy—and was not always happy in her decisions. To-day the situation has changed—and Britain is charged with the leadership of the anti-aggression front. It is important that we should keep this initiative: we are the most detached of the European forces, and ought to be capable of a clearer view. It is not enough to build up such a combination as will deter potential aggressors.

French post-war policy was paradoxical. All her efforts were directed by fear of the menace of Germany: to remove that fear France attempted to hold Germany down. If Germany were so powerful as the policy envisaged, it should have been obvious that so mighty a force could never be permanently subdued.

Even to-day German power is frequently under-estimated. Not her military strength—she has advertised it to the world: but her moral force. Whatever our ideas about the Nazi regime, it is sheer folly to under-estimate its hold on the German mind: too easy to argue, on reading exaggerated stories of minor operations in Germany, "Ah, they're feeling the pinch! They'll soon throw their leaders overboard now!" Make no mistake about it, Hitler is not likely to lose his place because of a shortage of butter!

There are Germans who do not share Nazi ideas, but the

most moderate Germans are united about the wrongs done to Germany since the War, and in the determination to right them. That is why it is important to study international complaints, for one day the present armed truce *must* merge into war or a policy of conciliation. A mere enlargement of armaments programmes is by itself useless, almost dangerous—the danger being that the armaments might control the policy, rather than the policy direct the use of the armaments.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain has many opponents, but they must at least give him credit for one vital quality—he has refused to be rattled by a crisis. Any attempt to dramatize the Austrian or Czechoslovak situation would have brought war appreciably nearer—or, at least, would have driven peace further away. This is a time for cool and calm consideration, a time for national unity on the broad principles of foreign policy. After all, who would willingly exchange places with Mr. Chamberlain to-day? It is easy to criticize, but I for one would not care to hold the choice of peace or war in my hands.

At such a time the opinion of the Man-in-the-Street may prove invaluable to the leaders of the nation, whoever they may happen to be. I have the greatest respect for the judgment of British public opinion. Give it the necessary evidence about both sides of the case, and its verdict is almost invariably sound. This is my excuse for presenting some of the outstanding problems of Europe, simply but impartially.

In case any reader should think that the subject matter of the book is too depressing, and is tempted to throw up his hands in despair at the difficulties of the problems, I beseech him to persevere to the last chapter, where I return to general considerations, and where I find optimistic signs even in the present gloom.

Since our survey of the Danger Spots of Europe automatically involves consideration of the problems of Treaty Revision, we need some general guide to equity. Perhaps there is one at hand. In 1918, when the tide of war turned against the Central Powers, President Wilson by tacit consent acted as spokesman for the Allies. He had formulated his famous Fourteen Points: he did not invent them, for many of them had been bulwarks of democratic policy for generations. Their importance can scarcely be overestimated. Clever propagandists used them as a bait for the peoples of the Central Powers. Since that time German and other defeated statesmen have complained that they were promised treaties of peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points. Their disillusionment was rapid, but it is one of their major complaints to-day that they were cheated—that the Peace Treaties were a travesty of the spirit underlying the Fourteen Points. There is a good deal in this argument: there is a good deal more in the argument that the spirit of the Fourteen Points represented the ideal for which hundreds of thousands of men fought and died.

As our guide, therefore, I suggest that we take the Fourteen Points. They may not be perfect, but they have one great advantage: since the complaint of Germany, now strong again, is that she surrendered on the basis of the Fourteen Points, but that the Peace Treaties were nothing like the Fourteen Points, it ought to follow that if the Peace Treaties could be revised so that they followed the spirit of the Fourteen Points, then Germany ought to be satisfied.

The German contention that they were cheated by the Peace Treaties is sound enough on paper. On October 5th, 1918, the German Government requested President Wilson to "take into his hands the task of establishing peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points." Later they asked him to

inquire if the Allied Governments also agreed to them. A memorandum to Wilson was sent by Britain, France, Italy and Belgium in identical terms. "Subject to the considerations which follow, they declare their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the President's address to Congress of January 8th, 1918 (i.e. the Fourteen Points), and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses. They must point out, however, that what is usually described as the Freedom of the Seas is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. They must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference." One other qualification stated that by the "restoration" of invaded territories the Allies understood that "compensation would be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air."

Thus the Fourteen Points *did* become the basis of the peace negotiations. The German leaders surrendered because their armies were beaten and their home front had crumbled, but the German people believed that the Fourteen Points were to be the basis of the peace: so did President Wilson. (It is, of course, quite pertinent to remark that Wilson formulated his Fourteen Points on January 8th, 1918. At that time the Germans showed no disposition to accept them—on the contrary! Not until they were on the point of collapse were the Fourteen Points adopted.)

What the Germans should have realized was that the Fourteen Points were foreign to the atmosphere of the hour. For four years the world had been full of hate, and they themselves had been among the best haters. Could they credit that the minds of men would change in a moment—the moment of victory?

(The younger of my readers—and I hope there are many of them—will probably find it hard to credit the violent hatreds of those days. I advise them to turn up the files of any popular newspaper. The French Press was worse: there was a coldly scientific series of articles in the *Matin* discussing the exact dose of famine necessary in order to create the maximum of individual suffering and public weakness in Germany. Politicians spoke in the same vein—the famous phrase about squeezing Germany “till the pips squeak” was coined by a responsible statesman. Yet Press and politicians alike but reflected the atmosphere and ideas of those retrogressive days.)

It is worth while reading through the Fourteen Points very carefully.

1. *Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there should be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in public view.*

The implication of the first seven words is a negotiated peace: the basis was agreed—the Fourteen Points—and it was assumed by the defeated Powers that the actual treaty would be a matter of discussion and negotiation. Nevertheless, at the last moment the President had referred the Germans, very correctly, to the Allied Commander in Chief, who had demanded what was in effect the complete surrender of Germany: with Germany at their mercy, the Allies decided that peace terms should be imposed, not negotiated. As Professor J. M. Keynes has shown, this decision had a profound effect on the treaties: the original draft was drawn up as a basis of bargaining, the Allies demanding a little more than they were ultimately prepared to accept. Then the entire draft was imposed.

Actually this “point” in its entirety is frankly impossible in the present stage of mental evolution. It was clearly

Done. Yet we shall have to glance again at Alsace-Lorraine.

9. *A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.*

Before the War over a million Italians were subjects of Austria-Hungary. As we shall see, however, the readjustment of the frontiers was carried out too generously, and to-day 300,000 Yugoslavs and 250,000 Germans are Italian subjects.

10. *The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the first opportunity of autonomous development.*

This was done; but, although this "point" was tackled sincerely, it has left more problems than perhaps any other. We shall consider these in some detail. When we come to talk of the demarcation of frontiers, readers will perhaps recall the phrase "readjustment of frontiers should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality" from the previous "point," and the phrase "along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality" from the one following. These principles are obviously intended to apply to all new frontiers, and sometimes one cancels out the other.

11. *Roumania, Serbia and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan States to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan States should be entered into.*

We shall find to our cost that frontier lines determined by nationality and history are not necessarily the same



thing. This "point" was honestly attempted, but there are plenty of problems in the Balkans still.

12. *The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to ships of all nations under international guarantee.*

The problems arising from this "point" are closely related to those of the two previous.

13. *An independent Polish State should be created which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.*

This is the most discussed "point," as we shall see. Even its phrasing is the source of vigorous argument.

14. *A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording material guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike.*

E.g., Abyssinia, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania.

While we are on the subject, we must glance at the "Four Principles" on which the Fourteen Points were based.

1. *Each part of the final settlement must be based upon the essential justice of that particular case.*
2. *Peoples and provinces must not be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were pawns in a game.*
3. *Every territorial settlement must be in the interests of the populations concerned; and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims among rival States.*

4. *All well-defined national elements shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new, or perpetuating old, elements of discord and antagonism.*

We might do worse than to consider European problems in the light of these principles. The trouble is that some of them contradict each other!

Two brief notes, and we can plunge into Europe's Danger Spots. I have scattered maps freely throughout the book, and they are perhaps as important as the text. It is elementary, but good, advice—that whenever you read of European affairs you should have an atlas at your elbow. It is especially essential when reading articles by the cheaper type of commentator who knows exactly what will happen to-morrow or what ought to have happened yesterday. A glance at a map, for example, raises posers for those people who prophesy inevitable war between Germany and Russia.

The photographs are non-provocative. It would have been easy to display sensational pictures of propaganda excesses or the bodies of the victims of minority "repression." As my aim is conciliatory, I have preferred pictures of lands and people which will provide a background for the political issues.

The other point is just as important—that the outlook on war is not the same abroad as in Britain and America. We are satiated states—in no circumstances could we gain by war. We talk about the "futility of war," and mean it. Yet when I used the phrase in Eastern Europe men stared at me in amazement. How could the Balkan countries have obtained their freedom, except by war? How else could Poland have been re-born—can you imagine Russia, Austria and Germany voluntarily liberating their Polish subjects and handing back freely the historic Polish territories? It is true that you may wander over Europe and find no one who wants war, but it is equally true that you will find few

people who believe that war is futile. War has persisted throughout the ages for lack of any alternative. So long as there are international problems to be solved, war will persist until an alternative *is* found. The League of Nations is adjudged a failure: nevertheless, it has to be revived, or something along the same lines created, before war can be banished. All this depends upon a creation of an atmosphere of confidence, a lengthy business. But the solution of a few of Europe's outstanding problems by methods of peace would do more to generate that atmosphere than a thousand high-sounding speeches.

Is this possible? Let us glance around Europe, and see for ourselves. It is understood that the importance of any particular problem is not necessarily gauged by the amount of space devoted to it: nor am I unfair when I devote ten pages to one side of a case and a paragraph to the other—one side may be obvious, the other almost unknown.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROBLEMS OF POLAND

POLAND has more problems to the square mile than any other Country in Europe. Many of them are difficult, but none are insoluble. I have even suggested solutions myself to some of them, but would remind the reader that these all carry one over-riding qualification—that they are only possible in an atmosphere of confidence. Poland has intimated quite correctly and firmly that *none* of them are soluble by ultimatum or intimidation; indeed, recent events in this direction have only postponed the solution of problems, since the confidence between Poland and Germany has been weakened, if not destroyed. In considering my personal comments, therefore, the reader is asked to accept as a first provision the five-year *status quo* I have already suggested.

Some of the problems of Poland are a matter of European rather than Polish concern, and have been postponed to the last chapter.

#### I

When the politicians talk about the Polish Corridor, they omit to tell us what a charming land it is—a land of gentle green hills and pleasant dales, populated by a friendly and interesting peasantry. The best approach to Poland, in fact, is by the little cargo boat which plies weekly between London Bridge and Danzig. It is just as well that first scenic impressions are pleasing, for after the rolling downs of the Corridor you must travel south for three hundred miles before striking the foothills of the

Carpathians. In between is the great Polish plain, fertile but very monotonous, connecting the German agricultural country with the Russian steppes.

Poland is geographically one of the most important States of Europe. Ethnically its situation is even more vital, since it joins—or separates—the contrasted cultures of Germany and Russia. Politically Poland is much underestimated in Britain, and our lack of interest in Polish affairs is remarkable. Our grandfathers knew much more about Poland than we do, and Polish struggles for freedom from Russian tyranny were sympathetically followed in Britain. Since Poland obtained her freedom, however, our cordiality has declined. Maybe a Polish friend of mine struck a psychological truth when he explained this: "The British are the friends of the under-dog, and have been throughout history. But, once the under-dog has got up, the British are no longer interested."

British outlook tends to ignore eastern Europe—yet Warsaw is a *central* European capital, and does not belong to the east. Take a map of Europe and draw a few lines from one extremity to the other—from the Shetland Islands to the Crimea, from North Cape to Cape Matapan, from Gibraltar to the easternmost point in the Urals—you may be surprised to find that they intersect near Warsaw.

The Poles are, of course, a branch of the great Slav race, akin to Russians, Ukrainians, Serbs, Bulgars, Czechs and Slovaks. The Polish Empire was founded towards the end of the tenth century, but it was no more than a loose authority over innumerable petty princes. Eventually fear of German neighbours induced a *more unified kingdom*, and in 1386 Poland joined hands with Lithuania through the marriage of the Polish queen with the Lithuanian grand duke. Lithuania at that time was a powerful State, with territories stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Thence, for four hundred years, Poland continued as a

considerable empire, infinitely greater in area than to-day. In the eighteenth century, however, Poland was weakened by internal strife: nobles claimed autocratic power, and religious differences held the land in ferment. On all sides were grasping neighbours, ready to snatch fragments of the tottering Empire. In 1772 Russia, Austria and Prussia seized slices of Polish territory, which whetted their



appetite for more. Torn by internal dissension, Poland simply invited aggression, and the morals of those days were no higher than those of to-day. By 1795 Poland had disappeared from the map of Europe, divided among the three neighbouring Powers. Napoleon re-established a portion of the ancient kingdom for a brief period, but on his fall Poland again became no more than a name.

For a hundred and fifty years Poland was no more than a name, an almost forgotten name—except in Poland.

There patriots schemed and fought for freedom against hopeless odds. It says something for the tenacity of race that in spite of appalling repression from the Russians—who occupied two-thirds of the old Poland—the language and culture of Poland survived.

For the whole period of Russian domination Poland was administered as a subject province, by Russians. The Poles had no rights, and little liberty. The extraordinary feature was that if a Pole cared to emigrate to Russia proper, any career was open to him. As he was more virile, energetic and intelligent than the average Russian, he usually did very well, and before the War a big proportion of Russian professional men—engineers, architects, doctors, and the like—were actually Poles. Similarly the higher ranks of the Russian army were freely recruited from Germans of the Baltic States—descendants of the Teutonic knights.

Then came the War, and with it a miracle. Poland's prospects were not bright. If Russia won, the Poles could only look forward to a greater Poland under the tyranny of the Czars. If the Central Powers won, there would still be no reborn Poland. The impossible had to happen—first the defeat of Russia, and then the defeat of Austria and Germany. So in the last days of 1918 the name Poland again appeared on the map of Europe.

The early days of the new-born State were precarious. In the south-east were millions of Ukrainians and Poles engaged in a confused civil war. This led eventually to open conflict between Poland and the new Russian Bolshevik State. At first the Poles were successful, but then they were beaten back to the gates of Warsaw. Here Pilsudski launched a counter-attack with devastating results, and the Russian retreat resembled a rout. A peace was hastily patched up: and, as we shall see, the agreed frontier was ethnically unsound, for millions of Russians were left inside Poland.

We have agreed that there is no such thing as a "natural" frontier, but Poland's boundaries are purely artificial, and a source of endless irritation. Only in the south, where the frontier follows the water-shed of the Carpathians, is there anything resembling a "natural" division. East and west—and especially east—the line of demarcation was settled arbitrarily, and we shall have to consider some of its principal complications.

Many of the internal difficulties of Poland can scarcely be blamed on the Poles. It must be remembered that for a hundred and fifty years the country lay under foreign yokes—a hundred and fifty critical and formative years, which saw the development of modern civilization and the birth of modern economic progress. The Prussians ruled their subject races efficiently, but firmly. The Poles were given little share even in local responsibility, and their own culture was vigorously submerged. Nevertheless, their standard of living was comparatively high.

The Austrians were far more tolerant; Galicia, the Austrian share of Poland, was almost a self-governing province. Here at least Polish culture could thrive, and statesmen and administrators be trained against the day when Poland would live again. The lot of the millions of Poles who lived under the corrupt and inefficient Russian rule, on the other hand, was miserable. They were reduced almost to the level of serfs, and all reminders of their race were brutally suppressed.

Thus the new Poland of 1918 comprised people who had been brought up under three very different codes of conduct and law. Even to-day, twenty years later, the codification of Polish law is still incomplete, and the three previous codes still survive—so that what is lawful in Cracow may be illegal in Warsaw. I did not need to look at a map as I crossed from Prussian Poland into Russian Poland. Communications deteriorated at once, peasants were miserably



housed, education was backward—in the old Russian Poland not more than twenty-five per cent of the people could read or write. The first task of the Polish Government, still incomplete, is to level up the standard of life among the three divisions. Polish language and culture, by the way, survived with remarkable firmness, and Polish is freer from dialects than any language in Europe.

Gradually domestic difficulties are being overcome, and we must recognize that in our own time Poland will be a powerful State again. Indeed, it is hard to see that the dignity of recognition as a Great Power can be delayed beyond our generation. The population of Poland to-day is 34,000,000 and her birth-rate is high. By 1950 her population is likely to be 50,000,000—and by that time Great Britain and France will count little more than 40,000,000 each. Poland's greatest military strength lies in her remarkable man-power. During the war, apart from ordinary casualties, over 1,000,000 Poles died of privation. Naturally, most of these were old people, so that the normal age balance of population was disturbed. Thus to-day fifty per cent of the people of Poland are under twenty-five years of age—sixty-six per cent under thirty!

These are remarkable figures. They mean that Poland, with a population of only 34,000,000, can mobilize an army larger than France with 41,000,000.

They are even more significant when considered in detail. The conscript classes being called up to-day are nearly as large in Poland as in Germany.

Consider the situation in the immediate post-War years—a defeated Germany in the trough of despair, bankrupt and without hope, and a resurrected Poland charged with enthusiastic and optimistic virility. Thus in the years 1920-5 the average number of boys born in Poland was 515,000. In Germany, with double the population, it was only 675,000.

More recent figures are even more striking. Although free from Government stimulus, the Poles are naturally more prolific than the Germans, and in the last ten years the average number of boys born in Poland was 511,000, while in Germany it was 395,000. In young man-power, therefore, Poland is only slightly inferior to Germany.

The Polish army is thus a factor of great importance. Poland is actually the fifth military power in the world. The standing army exceeds 300,000, including 45,000 regular officers and N.C.O.s, while trained reserves exceed 2,000,000 men. In time of war Poland could mobilize an army of 4,000,000 soldiers without crippling the essential economic life of the country.

The standing army includes thirty divisions of infantry, with two of mountain troops. These divisions are well equipped, and are trained to fight as independent units. Poland's frontiers are so vast—3,438 miles—that it is impossible to visualize warfare based on continuous lines of trenches; a Polish Maginot Line is not a practicable proposition. According to its station, each division has its allotment of mechanized and armoured vehicles. Polish tanks are of excellent quality and performance, and are now being produced in large numbers.

Supporting troops include thirty regiments of field artillery, attached to the divisions, independent brigades for general reserve, ten regiments of heavy artillery, mechanized units, anti-aircraft sections and armoured trains. I witnessed a shoot at unprepared targets by a field artillery brigade and was more than favourably impressed.

Yet the outstanding feature of the Polish army is its cavalry. I should class this as the best in Europe. It is certainly the quietest. More than once as I attended manœuvres in Eastern Galicia I found myself surrounded by cavalry who had given no hint of their approach. I much admired their equipment and the fashion in which it is

mounted—so that a man may ride at a canter without the slightest jingle.

Cavalry may be discredited in the West, but in the wide expanses of Eastern Europe its role is very important. In a war of movement, over a country with poor communications, the activities of mechanized forces are limited by considerations of supply, but in any part of Poland cavalry can live on the country.

Mounted troops consist of three regiments of light cavalry, twenty-seven of Uhlans, ten of mounted chasseurs, and ten squadrons of scouts. The divisions of the cavalry are traditional—all are equipped alike, with the machine-gun as the dominant weapon. I found the troops of excellent quality: trained to fight in small groups, their initiative was keen and their eye for cover remarkable.

The Poles have developed the offensive as well as the defensive powers of the machine-gun. I saw one remarkable advance by machine-gunners alone, without the support of infantry, artillery or tanks. While one line kept up a fierce barrage of bullets, a second line advanced ahead. This in turn sent out a venomous fire, and the process was repeated.

Polish arms are as good as any in Europe: some are of native invention, others made in Poland under licence. For example, Poland now manufactures her own 'planes from our Fury and Blenheim prototypes. At the recent aircraft exhibition in Paris, Polish exhibits attracted wide attention. From the other point of view it is interesting to note that the quick-firing gun now being installed in many British 'planes is a Polish invention.

Polish first-line aircraft number 1,250, with a similar number in reserve. There is an ample proportion of bombers—neighbouring countries offer far better targets than does Poland. The Los (Elk) bomber has a range of over 1,200 miles with a load of a little under 3,880 lbs., and a speed of

260 miles an hour. The Wilk (Wolf) all-metal fighter carries two machine-guns and one gun, has a range of nearly 800 miles and a speed of 290 miles per hour.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the Mewa (Sea-gull) observation 'plane, akin to the British Lysander type, but lighter and more easily manœuvred. All these 'planes are produced completely in Poland, and are exported in considerable quantities to the countries of south-eastern Europe.

With a large, well-trained and well-equipped army, Poland's only potential difficulty is that of supplies in wartime. Her Baltic coastline might easily be overrun in the first few days, and the alternative route via the Roumanian Black Sea ports is lengthy and precarious. Yet Poland can be self-supporting to a considerable extent. Her difficulties are based on the fact that her native supplies of metals and coal are largely drawn from Upper Silesia, which is adjacent to the German frontier.

The problem has been tackled with foresight and energy. The French loan of £25,000,000 two years ago has achieved remarkable results. While other countries talk of five-year plans, the Polish Press and Polish conversation re-echo with the continuous mention of "C.O.P."

The initials stand for "Centralny Okreg Przemyslowy," or the Central Industrial Area. In a triangle within the confluence of the rivers Vistula and San, about the town of Sandomierz, has been created a new industrial development. Existing towns and villages have increased their population by thousands per cent. One new town of 30,000 inhabitants springs up within a year! Already dozens of giant factories are in production. Considerable reserve stocks of essential commodities have been accumulated. The mountain streams of the Carpathians to the south yield abundant power. There is even a direct supply of "earth gas" from the Polish oilfield.

Thus the overwhelming bogey of the Polish high command has been laid. Even if the factories and mines of Upper Silesia were overrun or destroyed in the first days of war, Poland would no longer be crippled. She could carry on under her own resources until outside help could come by roundabout routes, or direct from Russia.

It would be a fatal mistake on the part of a potential enemy to underestimate the strength of Poland. Its people have a natural courage, like all the Slav races; unlike some, they have an adequate self-confidence, not even dimmed by their geography—with no strong frontiers and sandwiched between two powerful nations. Their patriotism is intense, and can only be compared with that of the Irish.

Nevertheless, what Poland needs is not a fantastic army, but twenty years of peace. There is an enormous amount of consolidation to do, vast programmes of work to be arranged and financed, especially on communications, and many problems to be solved.

Paderewski, the famous pianist who became first Prime Minister of Poland, used to tell a story of a professor at a cosmopolitan university. One day, setting a thesis for his class, he selected as a general subject: "The Elephant." The Englishman produced an essay on: "The Elephant, and how to hunt him." The Frenchman submitted a sparkling disquisition on "The Love Life of the Elephant." The German considered: "Gastronomical Possibilities of the Elephant." The Russian, after smoking several hundred cigarettes, produced the startling caption: "The Elephant—does it exist?" And the Pole headed his thesis: "The Elephant and the Polish Question."

There always has been a Polish question: to-day there are many. They are vital not merely to the well-being of Poland, but to the peace of Europe. There is more potential trouble to the mile along Poland's frontiers than anywhere else in Europe. We must glance at more than one of

Poland's Danger Spots: obviously the Polish Corridor comes first.

## II

The difficulty about the Polish Corridor is that it is Polish.

If, without previous education or propaganda, a plebiscite could have been taken in Britain five years ago on the subject of the Polish Corridor, the result would certainly have been heavily in favour of Germany. The emergence of Hitler has meant that many people would vote against him automatically, irrespective of the merits of the case, but even to-day it is probable that Poland would lose. Our knowledge of Polish history is remarkably slight, but the map speaks for itself. Here, argues the Man-in-the-Street who can forget Hitler, is a province of Germany cut off from the mainland by an artificial corridor solely designed to give Poland an outlet to the sea. Of course Germany is not satisfied, he argues; of course there is a clamour for the rejoining of East Prussia to the Fatherland. But the problem is not quite so simple as that. If the Polish corridor *were* merely an artificial creation, then it would already have disappeared from the map.

The Germans claim—with some justice, as we have seen—that they were cheated by the Treaty of Versailles. They surrendered, they say, on the understanding that peace would be made on the basis of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. If for the moment we accept the German contention in full, we are logically forced to the conclusion that Germany ought to be prepared to accept such clauses of the Treaty of Versailles as do not conflict with the Fourteen Points. Point Thirteen of the latter read: "An independent Polish State shall be erected, which shall include all territory with an indisputably Polish population, to which a free and safe access to the sea shall be given, and whose economic

and territorial integrity will be assured by international treaties."

The phrase "to which a free and safe access to the sea shall be given" was very unfortunate—it can be read to imply an artificial creation. The first important consideration in the Corridor problem is this—that, had the boundaries of Poland been determined purely on the first phrase of the Thirteenth Point ("All territory with an undisputably Polish population"), the Polish western frontiers, including those of the Corridor, would have been substantially the same as they are to-day.

In our thumb-nail sketch of Polish history we have seen the ancient kingdom of Poland ruthlessly divided among her three neighbours between 1772 and 1795. The bulk of Polish territory went to Russia, the southern provinces to Austria, and the north-western corner (including the area now known as the "Corridor"), to Prussia. Thus, until 1772, the "Corridor" was Polish territory, as it had been for hundreds of years. The Teutonic knights who colonized East Prussia—we shall meet them later—stepped lightly over Pomorze, as the Poles called the "Corridor" area. Prior to 1772, it is undisputed, Pomorze was overwhelmingly Polish.

Once German territory, however, Germans began to settle in Pomorze: naturally, they came as the landowner and trading class. The Poles were not seriously ill-treated, but were definitely a subject race, and many thousands of families emigrated, as opportunity offered, to America and France. Germans replaced them, so that by 1910 (according to German figures), there were 440,000 Germans in Pomorze to 550,000 Poles. It is necessary to comment on these figures—battles of statistics have been waged furiously since 1919. The Poles claim that the German figure is grossly exaggerated: it included soldiers, police and officials—that is, people quite foreign to the province

—and their families, and the real figure for Germans in Pomorze was not more than 200,000. On the other hand, the Germans counter-claim that the figure for Poles includes 110,000 Kashubians, who are not true Poles at all.

These Kashubians inhabit the northern section of the Corridor—that is, the most important part of it, adjoining the sea. Are they Poles or are they not? They are certainly not Germans—I was soon convinced of that. They speak a Slav dialect akin to Polish—the difference is a matter of accent rather than language. A Kashubian in Warsaw is equivalent to a Northumbrian in London, no more. In ethnic details they are definitely Slav and not Teuton. They are Catholics, while the Germans about them are Protestant. They themselves say that they are Poles, and historically they have always been classed as a Polish tribe. The Germans themselves classed the Kashubians as Poles until 1918. It was not until the Corridor arguments began that it was discovered that the Kashubians were really Germans after all. A more moderate opinion in Germany classes the Kashubians as Slavs, but as a non-Polish tribe. It is claimed, too, that although the Kashubians are certainly Slavs, they received all their culture and civilization from German sources, and at heart are nearer to Germany than Poland.

Another German grievance—and a weighty one—is that the “Corridor” was handed over to the Poles without plebiscite. Germany would have been prepared to give up the Poznan province—which, apart from the towns, was overwhelmingly Polish—but did not class Pomorze as an “indisputably Polish” area. Had a plebiscite been held, it is claimed the vote would have been in Germany’s favour. Nor is this a fantastic statement, urged as propaganda since it can never be proved or disproved. Certain similar areas *were* submitted to a plebiscite, and the results were startling—especially to the Poles.



To the south of East Prussia is a district known as Masuria. It is inhabited by Germans, Poles and a Slav tribe called the Masurians—a people not unlike the Kashubians. The Poles claimed that the Masurians were their blood-brothers—which was ethnically true. The Germans claimed that the Masurians, like the Kashubians, had been German so long that culturally they were Germans. This is not a strained argument—the descendants of French Huguenots or the Flemish weavers are just as English as descendants of warriors who came over with William the Conqueror or those who fought against them. The Powers at Paris, since the principle of access to the sea was not involved, decided to hold a plebiscite. It was known from German figures that the Polish and Masurian minorities were considerable. The Poles claimed that (counting Masurians as Poles), the Germans were easily outnumbered, and there is reason to believe that their claim was well founded. Yet in the plebiscite ninety-five per cent of the voters declared in favour of Germany!

Now this result is certainly surprising. It implies not only that all the Masurians voted German, *but that large numbers of Poles voted German as well*—since even German figures showed a minority of Poles considerably larger than five per cent. Why should Poles vote against incorporation in Poland? Is it true that they had become Germanized by long subjection to German rule and by association with German culture? A more likely reason is this: Poles, certainly Germanized, had to choose between their present settled life under just if strict German rule, and life in a new Poland of unknown size, potentialities, and capacity: a Poland engaged in a precarious war with Russia, and with a currency in confusion; they had to choose between comparative security and a risk, and their latent nationalism was not strong enough to induce them to chance the risk.

Thus the German argument about the Kashubians must

be given serious consideration, since it is quite possible that the Kashubians would have voted the same way as



the Masurians. This is purely a matter of conjecture, but I am confident of one thing—that if the plebiscite were held to-day, the Kashubians would decide heavily in favour

of Poland. Poland has justified its new existence; the risk which scared the Masurians has faded; Polish trade passing through the Corridor has brought a new prosperity to the Kashubians, and the Pomorze is one of the most settled districts in Poland.

Even if we deduct the 110,000 Kashubians from the Polish figure for the "Corridor," however, it still leaves 440,000 Poles—exactly equivalent to the German population, which certainly included over 200,000 soldiers, officials and their families. Indeed, the immediate reduction in the German population after the War tends to prove the Polish point, for when soldiers, officials and their families had been withdrawn the German population of Pomorze fell from forty per cent to twelve per cent. It can be claimed that the people who were left after the soldiers and officials had gone were the "natural" pre-War population.

Thus we can agree without effort that the natural population of Pomorze before the War had a Polish majority. Actually, this majority was considerable, for events have shown that the claims to regard the Kashubians as Poles were justified.

To-day, naturally, the population figures are vastly different. The latest census figures show about 110,000 Germans to 860,000 Poles. The changes are easily explained. The German troops and officials were of course withdrawn; further, more than 100,000 Germans decided that they might not be happy in Poland, and emigrated to Germany. This considerable exodus was compensated by an approximately corresponding influx of Poles from Germany, who decided to return to their re-born mother country. The change of population in the Pomorze, therefore, is the result of an exchange of population, to a large extent on a voluntary basis.

It is interesting to note, by the way, that the Germans are still a powerful landowning class in the Pomorze. Although

forming only twelve per cent of the population, they own more than forty per cent of the land area.

It is equally interesting to note that actually the "Corridor" area is the most Polish corner of Poland! There the Poles form almost ninety per cent of the population—and this figure is reached in no other corner of Poland. The explanation is that there are practically no Jews in the "Corridor," whereas over the rest of Poland they average more than ten per cent of the population; as we shall see, there are other considerable minorities, especially in the east. This point is so interesting that it is worth repeating—that the "Corridor" area comes nearer to being purely Polish than any other province of Poland.

Immediately to the south of Pomorze, and in British eyes part of the "Corridor" problem, is the province of Poznan. Here, before the War, the balance of population was even more in favour of the Poles. The problem was more complicated, however: there were in the province three cities—Poznan, Bydgoszcz and Torun (the old Posen, Bromberg and Thorn); here the Germans had a considerable majority. We have, in fact, the elements of Problem B—the towns largely German, and the country districts overwhelmingly Polish. Again, however, the withdrawal of troops and officials and the departure of emigrants has effected a vast change in the proportions. In pre-War German Bromberg, for example, the Germans formed eighty-four per cent of the population. To-day in post-War Polish Bydgoszcz, there are no more than eight per cent. Based on the undoubted pre-War German character of these towns, at one time a fantastic suggestion of a "German Corridor" through them was advanced, connecting East Prussia with Germany, but isolating a Polish Pomorze. Even if it were practicable at all, this solution would create more problems than it solved. To-day, however, moderate German opinion has abandoned

the claim for the return of Poznan, and is concentrated on the "Corridor" proper.

In considering all these figures, it should be remembered that Pomorze and Poznan formed German frontier provinces adjoining the potential Russian enemy. Consequently, considerable bodies of troops—over 100,000—were stationed there and were naturally and legitimately included in German census figures—which were compiled for domestic use, with no thought of a future Poland. The withdrawal of these troops, with civil servants and their families, explains the complete change in the composition of the towns.

In view of the maze of statistics flung at me from all sides, I conducted an interesting little experiment. It is definitely important to decide whether the "Corridor" area was Polish before the War—there is no argument about its ethnic description now. I rode from village to village and spent hours in the churchyards, taking a rough census of the generation which died just prior to the War. No clear-cut classification was possible; remember that the area had been German for a hundred and fifty years, and that all legitimate methods of Germanization had been employed. All young men had to serve in the German army or navy; all children were taught German—often in German; young men who wanted further education passed to German universities and imbibed German culture; the administration of the province was purely German, and it might have paid certain elements of the population to pretend that they were German. I classified the gravestones, therefore, under several headings: (1) German names with German inscriptions; (2) Polish names with Polish inscriptions; (3) Polish names with German inscriptions; (4) German names with Polish inscriptions; (5) German names Polonized; (6) Polish names Germanized; (7) Indeterminate. My calculations would have become very compli-

cated had I not found that the tombstones with Polish names with Polish inscriptions outnumbered all the other varieties put together.

Summarized, therefore, the position in the "Corridor" area is: the land was Polish for seven hundred years until 1772, when it was seized by Prussia. At that time it was overwhelmingly Polish, but by 1914 German immigration and Polish emigration had led to a settlement of Germans amounting to something between about one-third and one-half of the population; this proportion consisted to a considerable extent of military and governing classes, plus the landowners and the traders of the towns. There is no complicating history of cruelty and real oppression, as we shall find in some Balkan problems, and the German rule was firm but just. To-day, as is not questioned even in Germany, the district is again overwhelmingly Polish.

Thus, after apparently resembling Problem B, it appears that from the Polish point of view to be nearer to Problem A. Here is a Polish province: with a break of foreign occupation, it has always been Polish. It adjoins Poland, and is part of Poland. The question is, should it remain part of Poland?

This seems a fairly simple question to answer. Yet it does not dispose of the problem, by any means. Although historic and ethnic considerations are against her, Germany's point of view is unchanged and is perfectly comprehensible. Here is a famous German province, breeding ground of many of the military heroes of Prussia, cut off from Germany by a strip of foreign territory. In fact, the problem from Germany's point of view is not Problem A but Problem C, with many additional complications.

The real issue is one of national pride; the practical difficulties have been greatly exaggerated. The negotiations which followed the Treaty of Versailles made ample provision for trade between East Prussia and Germany.

Twenty-four direct trains a day cross the "Corridor," and more can be had for the asking. The recent difficulties arising out of "Corridor" transport were due to the fact that Germany, desperately short of foreign exchange, neglected to pay the Polish bills for the haulage of German trains across the "Corridor."

Much capital has been made, in Germany and elsewhere, of the legend of the "sealed" trains across the "Corridor." The implication is that a sanitary cordon of suspicion guards the German trains on their journey—the expression is used in precisely the same way as that describing the famous "sealed" train in which Lenin was transported from Switzerland to Russia during the War. Actually, the "sealing" of the train at the frontier is purely a Customs precaution. Arrived at the Polish frontier, a Polish engine takes over the German train, Polish customs officers come aboard, and carriage windows are closed. There is no examination of baggage, but the customs officers remain on the train to see that you do not dump contraband stuff in Poland during the train's run across Polish territory. This is reasonable enough. There is nothing insulting or degrading in the procedure. On one occasion I happened to be asleep during the crossing of the "Corridor," and I never knew that I had left German territory.

Ample railway transport, and unlimited sea communications, are thus available between East Prussia and the rest of Germany. The trade between the two is not large, and is only one-twelfth of the trade passing the other way—from Poland to the sea. On economic grounds, therefore, Poland's claim to the "Corridor" is as strong as on historic or ethnic grounds.

The fact that the "Corridor" area is Polish does not mean that the present frontiers are perfect. They were drawn to follow the approximate ethnic line of division, which is naturally confused, and the very haste of their drawing made

errors inevitable. There have been hundreds of irritating incidents, of which full propaganda value has been made by whichever country felt aggrieved. In a dozen places minor modifications of the frontier are possible and advisable. Along the western frontier, on a give-and-take principle, many such sources of irritation could be removed. The modifications would be trivial—the advance of the frontier by a mile here, its recession by a mile there. On the eastern frontier one anomaly might definitely be removed. When the details of the boundaries were being settled, the Poles were allotted the important Münsterwalde bridge over the Vistula, near Marienwerder. They promptly claimed, and were awarded, on purely military grounds of tactical defence, a bridge-head on the German side—a semi-circle of territory purely for the defence of the bridge. Thus some thousands of local Germans passed under Polish rule. It was then found that the bridge had lost most of its old importance since it was so near a frontier, so the Poles knocked it down and re-erected it where it could more usefully be employed. This was quite legitimate—but they still retain the bridge-head, a constant source of irritation to the local German population.

Germany has another very real grievance. When a river forms a frontier, the line is supposed to run down the middle of the river, so that both countries can use its water. But here the Polish frontier runs along the *right bank* of the Vistula, sometimes half a mile away from the river. Thus German trade can only use the Vistula by passing through Polish wharves. This is unfair. Even German cows may not go down to the Vistula to drink, which is ridiculous.

Actually, I believe that Poland would be ready to consider this and other minor rectifications of the "Corridor" frontier, except for the overwhelming fear that Germany might interpret her action as weakness, and having received a little would demand more. We are going to find our-



selves continuously up against this difficulty in our tour of European problems. In an atmosphere of confidence, there would be little difficulty in arranging the necessary notifications. But let there be no misunderstanding; the minor adjustments I have suggested would remove many sources of friction, but would not solve the problem of the "Corridor."

And before we make up our minds about the "Corridor," let us consider the problem of Danzig, which is so closely co-related.

### III

Danzig is a German city, but has been associated with Poland since its first days. It was an important town in the tenth century, but in 1308 it passed into the hands of the Teutonic knights. These gentlemen called themselves "Knights of the Cross." Formed originally for service in the Crusades, they found it more profitable to operate nearer home. It is a great pity that they did not stick to Palestine, for they were the begetters of the Polish Corridor and most of its kindred problems.

At the period when they flourished—the fourteenth century—Eastern Europe was largely pagan. The Teutonic knights decided to evangelize the Baltic provinces. They raided the districts now Western and Eastern Prussia, Northern Poland, and Lithuania. Their missionary efforts were, on the surface, amazingly successful. Capturing a village, they would murder half its inhabitants; the surviving half was then in a more persuasive condition to accept the Cross. Then their lives were spared, and they became the slaves of the knights. Of course, rapine, pillage and murder were common enough in those "good old days," but the Teutonic knights beat all their rivals in outrage under the guise of religion.

After its "conversion" to the creed of the knights,

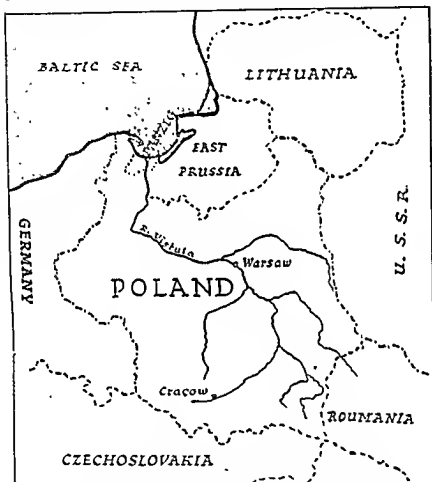
Danzig and East Prussia became thoroughly Teutonized. In the country districts the knights were the local squires and the local Slavs their serfs, but Danzig was different. German merchants settled there in large numbers; its situation at the mouth of the Vistula made it a vital centre of trade—it was one of the chief cities of the Hanseatic League. When, as was inevitable, the Teutonic knights rotted in their own corruption, the trading community of Danzig declined to be associated with a religious “order” which was an open scandal. *Danzig, a German city, offered itself to the kingdom of Poland.* This was in 1455.

The Polish kings gave Danzig their protection, but allowed the wide privileges of a free city. Nevertheless, legally it was Polish and was duly represented in the Polish Parliament. Practically the whole of Poland’s maritime trade passed over its wharves. This condition prevailed until the unhappy partitions of Poland, when it was seized by Prussia. For a brief space under Napoleon it was a free city once more, but returned to Prussia in 1814.

In President Wilson’s Thirteenth Point Poland was promised an access to the sea. Automatically she demanded Danzig. She claimed, with reason, that Danzig was the natural port for Poland—the only natural port. Agreeing that Danzig was largely German, Poland claimed that this fact could not stand against her own obvious geographical rights—the Vistula was Poland’s river, the main trade artery of the country: was a foreign Power to control its mouth? With Danzig left in German hands, Poland’s export trade would be impossible; the narrow strip of coast-line allotted to the “Corridor” was merely a mud-bank, utterly unsuited for a deep-sea port.

The “Big Three” at Paris—Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George—considered these and many other arguments more forcibly advanced. Clemenceau would cheerfully have allocated Danzig to Poland—anything to despoil

Germany. But Lloyd George was reluctant. He was a believer in the principle of ethnic frontiers, and could not get away from the fact that Danzig was not Polish. To



POLAND'S MAIN ARTERY—THE VISTULA: PROBLEM F

award a German city to Poland could only lead to disaster. So a compromise was arranged.

Danzig, with a hinterland of nearly eight hundred square miles and a population of 400,000, became a free city under the protection of the League of Nations. Poland's

rights in Danzig are exclusively economic. The railways and docks of the port are administered by a commission of Poles and Danzigers, with a neutral chairman. Foreign affairs and customs are within the Polish orbit, but the Free City has its own currency, and its Council is responsible for all other services—education, posts and telegraphs, police, and so on. The official language is German. A League of Nations High Commissioner was appointed to co-ordinate affairs and to keep the peace between the two parties.

There were many potential difficulties to such an arrangement, but they were by no means insuperable. A little good will on either side, a frank acceptance of the situation and Danzig might have settled down to a friendly prosperity. But the Danzigers had no goodwill; we must not blame them too hardly—torn from their Fatherland in the bitterness of defeat, they could scarcely regard Poland with immediate smiles. Almost at once there was friction. It came to a head in 1920. Then Poland was fighting for her infant life against Bolshevik Russia. England and France were too war weary to send men, but both had ample spare stocks of unwanted munitions, which were shipped to Danzig. And the dockers of Danzig refused to handle them!

(Quite by the way, two intriguing trifles of interest have emerged in this chapter. Scarcely in Germany did I ever hear such vituperous tirades against Communism as in Danzig; one possible exception was from the mouth of Ludendorff. Yet Danzig refused to help Poland in her fight against the Bolsheviks! And Ludendorff, by conveying Lenin from Switzerland in the famous "sealed train," first loosed Communism on Europe.)

Poland's reply to this action greatly complicated the whole problem of Danzig and the "Corridor." Yet it was but natural. Such a position, it was argued, was intolerable—Poland's *only* port, and it refused to handle vital supplies

at a moment of life or death! There must never be a chance of a repetition—Poland must have a Polish port.

There was little choice in Poland's tiny coast-line. Eventually Gdynia, a fishing village, was selected. The construction of the port was a colossal task, for the site was utterly devoid of natural advantages. Every basin had to be dug out of peat bogs, and all approaches had to be dredged. But in twelve years a tiny fishing village has become a modern city of 100,000 inhabitants, with a harbour handling eight million tons of merchandise a year, and capable of handling almost double. Not even America could beat the rapid transformation of Gdynia to a well-planned town of most modern construction. The Poles are justly proud of their achievement—even if it were backed by French capital. Yet Danzig has one advantage Gdynia can never possess—the Vistula.

Now, before the War, Danzig handled little more than the local trade of West Prussia. Its old days of glory, when it was the port of the entire Vistula basin, were over—for Russia, now controlling the greater part of that basin, insisted that Russian trade should go through Russian ports. But Danzig, as the only port of Poland, waxed prosperous immediately after the War. Its one million tons of trade became ten; merchants and labourers of Danzig were well paid and well fed at a time when Germans were bankrupt and starving. Had they worked in friendly fashion with Poland their unlimited prosperity might have continued indefinitely. Gdynia, of course, made a big difference.

At the moment Polish trade is shared almost equally between the two ports. Danzig still handles seven million tons—a great increase on the pre-War figure, but much less than ten years ago. So Danzig grumbles at Poland. You must make some allowance, too, for the jealousy of the veteran of a new and successful rival. As Danzig's trade fell and that of Gdynia mounted, political action resulted.

I don't think I ever saw a more Nazi city than Danzig—on the surface. Its ancient streets are continuously hung with swastikas and portraits of Adolf Hitler. There is an insistent demand for return to Germany. Yet—there can be no mistake about this—return to Germany would mean virtual bankruptcy for Danzig. Instead of her present seven million tons, she would merely handle the one million, or less, of local trade. The rest would go to the hated rival Gdynia. Why, then, does Danzig wish to commit economic suicide? Is it quite impossible for Germans to live happily beside Poles? remembering especially that the Polish hand in Danzig is of the lightest. Is nationalism so important? If I, an Englishman, have the alternatives of starving in England or living in comfort under the French, which would I choose? Poles and Danzigers lived side by side in friendly fashion for hundreds of years, but now they have been persuaded that this was all a mistake.

There must be some reason for this excess of patriotism at the expense of pocket. As I walked the be-flagged streets of Danzig, I discounted what I saw. In spite of this display of fervour, of the "Heil, Hitlers" and the uniforms, I recalled the severe setbacks sustained by the Nazis in their first efforts to secure control of Danzig. And the opposition came not merely from the small Polish minority, but from Germans. They are real Germans, who would not exchange their language, culture and traditions for any in the world; they would welcome re-union with Germany as fervently as the rest; but they were not prepared to condemn their city (and themselves) to ruin in the process.

(I ought to emphasize that the word "German", in spite of all that Herr Hitler may claim, does not mean a man of any particular birth or racial descent, but of German speech and culture. At the time of the First Partition, the population of Danzig was more than fifty per cent Polish, and remained so for several generations. After the fall of

Napoleon, it was obvious that the future of Danzig lay with Prussia, and the Poles rapidly lost their language—if they wanted to prosper, they had to speak German. Soon Germans and Poles were hopelessly mixed: their descendants, German-speaking, are all classed as German. Of the first two Germans I met in Danzig—both Nazis—one admitted to four Polish grandparents, the other to three. It is amusing to inspect family vaults, and to notice how Polish names became Germanized early in the nineteenth century. There is something in the Polish argument that if Danzig had been handed over to them completely in 1919, these people would rapidly have become Polonized, and in a couple of generations the city would have been largely Polish again.)

It was one of the merchant class who gave me a clue which I followed up. Due to its comparative prosperity, taxation in Danzig is very much lighter than in Germany. Consequently, a good number of pensioned and fixed income people have transferred their habitation from Germany to Danzig. We know this type of "patriot," too; in our case they retire to the Channel Islands, where income tax is fourpence in the pound. Safely ensconced in this delightful retreat, they are more "patriotic" than we ourselves. They demand a huge navy and a bigger air force—which we, not they, have to pay for.

Danzig has a plague of these Colonel Blimps—many of them are, in fact, retired colonels of the old German army and their like. They have no responsibility, but make a lot of noise. They have been suitably backed by Nazi propaganda, which is efficient in Germany even if it fails abroad. Between them, they now control the majority of the votes in Danzig; their spokesman hurls insults at the League of Nations, and the position of its High Commissioner has become intolerable. Stories have been current in Germany about Polish oppression in Danzig and

the miseries of the Danzigers. They are utterly exaggerated. It never was possible for Poland to oppress Danzig, even if she wished—and Danzig is certainly far more prosperous than Germany.

Danzig is now to all outward appearances a Nazi city. After holding out for years, the opposition of merchants and Poles has been overcome. Presumably the League of Nations still has some legal rights, but I am unable to discover any that mean anything. In everything but name, except for the Polish traffic, Danzig is German—its political return only awaits a favourable moment.

But what of Poland? In 1933 I never met a Pole, from Pilsudski downwards, who would ever admit that Danzig could be returned to Germany. Many of them were quite reasonable in their arguments—there was none of the “not a yard, not a comma” business. They recognized the German character of Danzig, but argued that, since the Vistula is purely a Polish river, it is unthinkable that its last dozen miles should be controlled by a foreign—possibly an enemy—Power.

The possibility of the Vistula controlled by an enemy Power need not be given undue weight. In the event of war between Germany and Poland, the Polish seaboard would disappear in a few hours. Even if it could be held, Poland has no navy to speak of, and the coast would be at Germany's command.

The Poles accepted the Nazification of Danzig with exemplary calmness. One statesman put it to me: “What Germans do to Germans is their own affair. If they care to worship Hitler, and beat up one another, and march about in parades instead of getting on with their jobs, that is a domestic policy—but we *are* concerned with our rights in the port. The moment one of these is violated, then a serious situation arises.”

Nevertheless, I believe that if the approach were rightly



made, Poland might eventually agree to modifications of the status of Danzig. Poland holds the whip hand—all her present trade could, if necessary, be carried through Gdynia, and the quays of Danzig would be deserted. Yet Poland is young in the trading market: she is a land of vast resources and possibilities. Given a return to normal conditions of international trade, Poland's imports and exports might easily soar to fifty million tons instead of fifteen; that is, twice the absolute capacity of Danzig and Gdynia combined. Poland would then have to seek further port facilities at Memel, Königsburg and Stettin. It is, of course, quite a normal thing for countries to use ports in another country. Czechoslovakia and Switzerland, both with a considerable export trade, have necessarily used foreign ports, without serious inconvenience.

If Danzig were ever returned to Germany it would be essential that Poland should retain full transit and maritime rights. If the transfer were arranged amicably, it is certain that the Germans would grant them most willingly. If this were a problem between England and Scotland, we should solve it in our own unique way by the creation of a Public Authority. We are almost the only country which uses Wheat Commissions and Milk Marketing Boards—they are simply not understood on the Continent; yet within their limits they are valuable vehicles.

We might arrange the question this way: Danzig would return to the sovereignty of the Reich, its frontiers being adjusted where necessary according to ethnic claims. A Port of Danzig Authority would be created, with wide powers. It would consist of an equal number of Poles and Germans, with a neutral chairman, and would have complete control over all docks and harbours. Its wharves would be in the nature of a Customs Bonded warehouse. Incoming goods destined for Germany would pay duties

as they passed from the wharves; goods for Poland would pay duties as they crossed the Polish frontier—or, if more convenient, on leaving the wharves, the duties of course being paid to the Polish customs. The Authority would act as a clearing house for all financial transactions. Poland would pay her due share of harbour costs, and no more. She would have the unlimited use of railways from Danzig to the frontier at agreed rates. Many foreign countries use London as a Bonded Warehouse for many commodities; it would not be an impossible scheme in Danzig—if Germany and Poland acted together.

It would be very difficult, I agree, to persuade continental countries of the value of our Public Utility and kindred Corporations. There would be much shaking of heads, and a general impression that they could not possibly work. But we in England know that they do.

In the autumn of 1938 I was in Danzig again, and found the tension heightened. The Nazification of the city was complete: Poles and Jews were beaten up, and all German opponents of the Nazi "ideology" had disappeared. Many of the Danzig leaders were not Danzigers at all, but Hitler's nominees, imported from Germany.

The trading classes were frankly apprehensive. It seemed to be only a matter of time before Hitler seized the Free City. How would he take it—by force, maybe involving a European war? Even if he did it by peaceful methods, ruin lay ahead for Danzig. I found even fervent Nazis (who were also merchants) who were quite content that things should remain as they were: and ordinary people, who had heard of the shortage of food in Germany, and had contrasted it with their own plenty.

It was quite apparent that no one in Danzig wanted war. Yet considerations of reasonable solutions must be temporarily postponed. In March 1939, Germany made a formal demand for the return of Danzig, promising that Poland

should retain ample port rights. The moment was unfortunate. A few weeks earlier Memel had been seized; precisely similar promises being made to the Lithuanians—and immediately broken. Assuredly our pre-requisite of confidence was not present! The seizure of Czechoslovakia quite naturally destroyed confidence in Hitler's word, and Poland was not disposed to make a settlement which might have been possible a year earlier—or might be possible a few years hence. Memel was immediately converted into a naval port: Danzig as a naval port would be a stranglehold on the throat of Poland.

Colonel Beck's reply to Hitler was dignified but firm. Poland would never allow herself to be barred from the Baltic, he declared. Two conditions were necessary for negotiations, he pointed out—"peaceful intentions and peaceful methods of action"; and he was ready at all times to discuss the problem under such conditions. A solution by force or bluster he barred, making it quite plain that Poland would fight for her rights.

He also outlined Poland's own solution to the Danzig problem—that the League of Nations Commissioner should be withdrawn, and that a common Polish-German guarantee should be given of the existence and rights of the Free City. This would satisfy German aspirations in every respect except prestige, since the administration is already purely German.

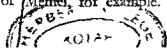
His offer—a reasonable one, admirably suited for the necessary years of gathering confidence—was received with a storm of abuse. Events followed only too reminiscent of those in the Sudetenland the previous autumn: attacks were made on Polish customs houses: Polish newspapers were held up at the frontier: thousands of storm troops entered Danzig as "tourists": supplies of arms and ammunition were smuggled into the city, or even dropped by parachute from aeroplanes.

The intention was obvious—not necessarily to provoke open conflict, but to break Poland's nerve. If conflict came, Poland was to appear to be the aggressor. German troops would not be the first to enter Danzig; instead, there would be a military demonstration by the people of Danzig, together with a "voluntary" offer of the territory to the Reich. This, however, is not a trick which can be played more than once, and Poland has had ample warning. So Danzig continues on a note of high tension, and an atmosphere prevails in which reasonable consideration of its problems is difficult, if not impossible.

The present tension in Europe cannot continue indefinitely. If and when it is eased, then Poland may proceed to a solution along the lines of that I have outlined—a solution quite possible in times of sanity, but unthinkable in face of aggression. I do not regard the return of Danzig to Germany as eventually impossible.

But at least I have no delusions whatsoever on Poland's attitude to the "Corridor." No one who has not been to Poland can know what that miserable coastline means to the Poles. As coastal scenery, it is just about as distinguished as Canvey Island, yet Poles save up for years and travel for hundreds of miles just to gaze on Poland's little bit of sea. Peasants in the interior—who have never seen the sea, or have any hope of seeing it—will tell you with pride the story of Gdynia, and honour you because you have been there. Gdynia was the first Polish national achievement—it means more to the Poles than the "Queen Mary," the Ashes and the British Navy mean to us. Sometimes impressions are misleading, but of this I am absolutely certain—*Poland would never give up the "Corridor" except by force.*

There are many quarters in Britain and America where this is not understood. There is an airy assumption in loose phrases that Poland might be "compensated" elsewhere—by the cession of Memel, for example. Some theorists



have advanced the suggestion that Germany and Poland will one day attack Russia, and that Poland will be allocated the Ukraine in lieu of the "Corridor." All these suggestions are fantastic. The man who thinks that Poland would peaceably exchange Gdynia for Memel is either grossly ignorant or else absurdly optimistic. Memel would be hopeless as a Polish port: ninety per cent of Poland's exports come from her western provinces, and the communications to the east are primitive and costly. Further, why should Poland exchange a port and "Corridor" which are Polish, for a port and another corridor which very definitely are not? The Ukraine suggestion is even more ludicrous. Poland is not likely to exchange the "Corridor," the very hub of her prosperity, for another unruly province—already she has enough trouble with the Ukrainians in Galicia. No, the international scene frequently changes, but one fact remains constant—Poland would *never* give up the "Corridor" except by force after military defeat in war. Any paper solution of the problem which is not based on this fact is utterly worthless.

At present the "Corridor" is a constant danger—a map alone is sufficient proof. Authorities, like Lord d'Abernon and Marshal Foch have pointed to the "Corridor" as the source of the next war. Poland, you may take it as definite, would never agree to any but minor rectifications except as a result of a lost war. What is Germany's solution? It is reasonable, it is claimed, but is not helpful.

For propaganda purposes the "Corridor" is considered as the whole of the lost provinces. German maps show the old frontiers with the "Corridor" and Poznan temporarily escheated. The crusade for the recovery of the lost provinces has been fervently preached—but politically calmed since the conclusion of the temporary pact with Poland. Yet no reasonable German expects Poland to give up the whole of the provinces. Poznan, it is agreed, shall become

Polish for ever; Germany would recognize the Polish rights quite definitely—if her solution to the “Corridor” could be implemented.



THE POLISH "CORRIDOR"

(a) 1771. (b) 1772-1918. (c) 1919. (d) A German "solution"

But far too much has been read into that phrase "access to the sea," Germany argues. President Wilson, when he formulated the phrase, had in his mind economic access,

not political—not a corridor of Polish territory, but an arrangement of Polish rights in German ports, such as Czechoslovakia once enjoyed. (This argument is somewhat weakened by the fact that President Wilson was one of the creators of the Polish "Corridor." Thus, if such an arrangement was in his mind, he must have changed it.) This reading of the phrase is still possible, the German insists. The port of Gdynia is a new factor, but raises no great difficulty. Gdynia itself should remain Polish, together with a small hinterland—a breathing space and market garden, so to speak. The rest of the "Corridor" area, as far south as the line of the river Netze, should be returned to Germany. Poland would retain the fullest possible control of the railway to Gdynia, and Poland would naturally have the fullest use of the docks of Danzig. Thus the map would be cleaned up in a manner appealing to the German tidy mind, and East Prussia could be rejoined with the Fatherland: true, Gdynia would now be separated from its Motherland by a German corridor, and Poland would lose a few hundred square miles of territory, but she would gain in German friendship. Although German maps still show the whole of the lost provinces within their dotted frontiers, you may take my word that the plan I have outlined above is not far from the one which would satisfy moderate German opinion. The principal objection to it is that the Poles would never agree to it.

Another objection is that not all Germans would agree to it—and some of the dissenters would be found among the group now all-powerful. There is a Nazi proverb: "What Germany once held must become German again"—which sounds magnificent, but means certain European war if any attempt should be made to implement it. With a strong and vociferous section of German opinion against such "weakness," and with the whole of Poland utterly rejecting it, the plan of the moderate Germans is not very useful.

But if it is feasible to run a Polish railway across German territory, as this plan envisages, it might be possible to run a German railway across Polish territory. We have to make up our minds that there is no natural solution to the problem of the "Corridor."

"The problem of the Polish Corridor is not one of right against wrong," wrote Professor L. B. Namier. "It results from a conflict of two principles, of the unity of the sea-board versus the unity of the river-basin. . . . The Poles are the nation of the Vistula, and their settlements extend from the sources of the river to its estuary; no other European nation is centred to that extent on one single river."

There being no natural solution, we have to manufacture an artificial one. Consider such a scheme as this: with Danzig returned to Germany, and Polish harbour rights suitably safeguarded along the lines I have previously suggested, the northern part of the "Corridor" becomes little more than twenty miles wide. It is a pleasant district of low hills and green valleys: is it too much to expect of the human intelligence which plans regular Atlantic flights, tunnels the Mersey, and bridges Sydney Harbour, to suggest that German ingenuity should plan and build a combined railway and motor road entirely on high viaducts or enclosed in tunnels through the Kashubian hills? Far more fantastic things than this are likely to happen within the next twenty years. This is not quite the same thing as the cession of a strip of Polish territory across the "Corridor." This has already been demanded—and refused.

Were internationally minded men in control of the present destinies of Germany and Poland, there would be no "Corridor" problem. But even if the swing of the pendulum brought such men into power, the problem only ceases to be a problem so long as they *are* in power, and any future Hitler could raise Germany by pointing at



the map. That is the danger of this particular problem—that it will not solve itself by being postponed.

Unlike some of Europe's Danger Spots, the Polish "Corridor" is well known to the world, since its dangers are so obvious. For many years after the War it appeared that Lord d'Abernon and Marshal Foch were right. Then in 1934 came a temporary respite. Hitler had gained control of Germany, and found himself surrounded by opponents, if not actually enemies. It was necessary to secure at least one of his frontiers while he adjusted internal affairs. In 1934 a Ten-Year Pact was signed with Poland. Propaganda about the "Corridor" ceased abruptly—though this as, we have seen, means little, since Germany could be aroused at will in a few hours. Later we shall touch upon the present relations between Germany and Poland, but the Ten-Year Pact, after miraculously surviving half its natural life, has now been denounced by Hitler and the Polish "Corridor" returns to its old position as Europe's Danger Spot Number One.

#### IV

Silesia holds just as many potential dangers as the Polish "Corridor," maybe more. The "Corridor" touches German pride, but Silesia touches the German pocket.

In the early days of the present age, Silesia appears to have been occupied by Celtic tribes, eventually driven westward by the Slavonic horde pressing from the east. As early as A.D. 1000 Silesia was part of the loose-knit Polish kingdom, but under a series of weak rulers it disintegrated into a medley of petty states—still nominally subject to Poland, however.

Early in the fourteenth century the local nobles transferred their allegiance to Bohemia, and Silesia thus eventually became a province of the Austrian Empire. In 1742,

however, Frederick II of Prussia obtained Silesia by conquest, and the Germans held the province until the end of the last war.

At the time of its Prussian conquest, Silesia was an agricultural province inhabited mainly by people of Slav origin—not all pure Poles, by any means, but nearer in kinship to the Poles than to any of their neighbours. There had always been a considerable number of German settlers, however, and the discovery of coal and other minerals led to German immigration on a considerable scale. After the Prussian conquest, naturally, this was intensified. In the last century Silesia developed very rapidly into one of the most important coal and iron fields of Europe. New towns were built, and the old enlarged beyond recognition. The development was almost entirely the work of German engineers, backed by German capital. Thus the towns became largely German, while the agricultural peasantry remained overwhelmingly Polish or—in Lower Silesia—quasi-Polish. It should be pointed out that the immigrants into Silesia were not only Germans, but included tens of thousands of Poles from contiguous districts, attracted by the demand for labour in the mines.

During the peace negotiations, Poland put forward a claim for Silesia on the grounds that ethnically the province was largely Polish. Whatever the French attitude, Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson declined to admit this claim without proof. It was decided (Article 88 of the Treaty of Versailles), that a plebiscite, under Allied control, should be held in Upper Silesia. The plebiscite deserves close study by those people who consider plebiscites as a panacea for all ethnic troubles. The fact is that plebiscites are only decisive arguments when held under conditions which are perfectly fair and just, *and which are recognized as fair and just by both parties*. In the case of the Saar, these conditions prevailed; in the case of Silesia they certainly did not. It

is obviously hopeless to expect a reasoned plebiscite in the frenzied aftermath of war.

The moment the decision to hold a plebiscite was announced, both Germany and Poland naturally got busy, and soon Silesia shuddered under a wave of propaganda. The Polish leader was a gentleman by the name of Korfanty; he was either a patriot or a bandit, according to your reading of history. Not content with verbal propaganda, Korfanty led armed bands into Upper Silesia, attempting to seize the province by force. He believed that the powers in Paris might be influenced by the presentation of a *fait accompli*, and later events at Vilna proved that he had not misjudged his men.

The Germans, however, although willing to accept the control of the French, British and Italian Mission sent to conduct the plebiscite, were furious at this new insult—gangs of terrorists, of the despised Polish race, running amok about the country, beating up potential opponents. An irregular patriotic force was hastily organized, and Silesia experienced the miseries of guerrilla warfare. Very disturbing was the attitude of the French, who controlled the Allied Mission, and who openly favoured the Poles. A brigade of British troops was hastily sent out to assist the forces of fair play but, had the Germans lost the poll, they would have been justly entitled to complain of the methods of their opponents and the one-sided attitude of the principal "returning officer."

Due perhaps to last-minute British and Italian influence, the actual plebiscite was carried out without major incidents. The result of the polling was a surprise to the Poles and the French: ninety-eight per cent of the qualified electors voted—700,000 for Germany, and 480,000 for Poland: that is about sixty per cent for Germany and forty per cent for Poland. Now these figures are remarkable, for even the Germans admit that there were more than forty

per cent of Poles in the plebiscite area. Thus we find a repetition of the case of the Masurian plebiscite—many Poles must have voted for Germany. Again it should be explained that they had been under a just German rule and surrounded by German culture so long that they were partly Germanized—the local Polish dialect naturally includes many words of German origin. Further, most of the Poles were working for German masters. And if Korfanty and his gangs roused Polish consciousness in some, they must have aroused apprehension and censure in others.

(Any deductions drawn from the plebiscite figures to-day should be very carefully considered. In 1919 it appeared as if the new Germany were about to settle down as a democratic republic. It does not by any means follow that Poles would vote in such numbers for Nazi Germany to-day !)

Of the electoral districts, 614 showed a majority in favour of Germany, 597 in favour of Poland. Naturally, the towns generally showed a heavy German poll, the country Polish. The official professional and employing classes, together with skilled labourers and artisans, were mostly German; peasants and labourers were largely Polish.

Here was a delicate problem for the Commission of Control. The Germans naturally rejoiced, claiming the entire province; Korfanty, on the other hand, again attempted a *coup d'état*, and for a time did control a big stretch of Upper Silesia, actually ejecting the representatives of the Allied Powers from his area. German patriots prevented the spread of his invasion, and British reinforcements gradually obtained control. Korfanty's irregular bands, after the fashion of their kind, took to wholesale plundering, until the Polish inhabitants themselves pleaded for their suppression.

France had wished to allocate Upper Silesia to Poland, despite the plebiscite; Britain and Italy desired to honour the result. A council on a broader basis, including neutrals,

now considered the problem, and in October 1921 divided Upper Silesia into two parts.<sup>1</sup> It was a delicate problem—how to divide a province where the towns were German and the rural districts Polish—complicated by the fact that many highly industrialized and German-majoritied districts adjoined the Polish frontier. Only one-third of the territory was allocated to Poland, but it included seventy-five per cent of the mines and foundries of Upper Silesia.

Germany scarcely needed the impetus of the dispossessed industrialists to raise a great cry of dismay. It was pointed out that Silesia had been developed as one economic sphere; its mines and communications were inter-dependent, and an artificial separation must spell catastrophe; it had been entirely developed by German brains and capital; the towns, surely the more important, were overwhelmingly German.

Petty sources of irritation were not wanting, as is inevitable in any re-drawn land frontier. Mines in Germany found that their administrative offices were in Poland; foundries belonging to a single German company were connected by railways which now ran through Poland; communications built at great expense were now useless; towns found their waterworks and hospitals in a foreign country; and so on—the story is not novel, and was repeated on a dozen new frontiers in Europe.

The Commission appointed by the League of Nations did its best to safeguard the interests of the region over the difficult immediate period. For fifteen years railways in Upper Silesia were to work under a joint German-Polish management; natural products should pass from one country to the other without duty—i.e., in effect, Germany could draw coal and iron from Poland without artificial dues; any inhabitant of the plebiscite area might hold a *permis de circulation*, permitting him to cross the frontier without formality; private rights should be res-

<sup>1</sup> See map, page 347.

pected; minorities in both countries should receive the fullest privileges (detailed in 100 printed pages); and so on. Although it sounds clumsy and make-shift, this arrangement actually worked surprisingly well.

German imports of Polish coal, however, declined—Germany naturally concentrated on the further development of mines within her own frontiers. Ten years ago, therefore, Poland was faced with a strange situation—she was producing far more coal than she could use! For home consumption is very small; industry is not highly advanced, and domestic heating in eastern Poland is almost entirely by wood. The problem was solved by the stoppage in the British mines in 1926; Poland invaded our Scandinavian markets. Even when we returned to full production Poland kept her grip, assisted by subsidies and absurd rail-rates. The rate from Silesia to Gdynia, for example, is about three and sixpence per ton—a journey of over two hundred miles! Special selling prices for export were arranged, well below the figure for home sales, and British rates were scarcely competitive. Polish conditions of labour and wages were, of course, very inferior to ours. In the end we had to compromise, and to make an arrangement with Poland sharing the Scandinavian markets.

Although many thousands of Germans went back to Germany after the partition, the ethnical position in Polish Upper Silesia is much the same—except that now, of course, the proportion of Poles is larger. But the towns are still German; in Katowice (the old Kattowitz), I could easily have imagined myself in Germany; directors, engineers and foremen are still German, labourers and peasants Polish.

Here, then, is a difficult situation. The Germans claim that, having won the plebiscite, they should have been awarded the whole province. The Poles say that this is absurd—they got forty per cent of the votes, so are entitled to forty per cent of the province. The Germans argue that

cession would never have been considered by the Allies had it not been for Korfanty's gangs of terrorists; the Poles say that the raids into Silesia were a natural patriotic outburst, with emphatic local support. The Germans point out that the partition made 350,000 Germans become Polish subjects; this is true—but there are still more than 500,000 Poles on the German side of the frontier. The Germans point to the German development of Silesian industry; the Poles claim this to be a vagary of history—if, when coal was discovered, the province had been Polish (as it ought to have been), then Poles would have done the developing. And so on, *ad infinitum*.

Until recently petty irritations were surprisingly rare—due, probably, to the influence of the German-Polish Ten-Year Pact. I did, it is true, hear many complaints, but not one-tenth of the number I had expected. The propaganda of the earlier years was largely responsible. Blame is difficult to apportion. I investigated one typical case. A German schoolmaster was dismissed, and a howl of indignation arose from the German minority. I found that the schoolmaster, a fervent patriot, was using his influential position to spread anti-Polish views among his pupils. The Poles, who paid his salary, promptly dismissed him. What would you have done? To-day such things are seized upon by German propaganda, and any local difficulty becomes a matter of hate. Police action against a rioting crowd is "persecution," and every incident provoked by German irritidentism is grossly exaggerated and perverted.

And what is to happen in Upper Silesia, a complicated mixture of Problems A, B, and E? Germany claims the return of the expropriated area, less two small districts. The Poles claim that—apart from the other arguments mentioned—Upper Silesia is vital to her economic life, which is partially true, for she has no other mines to speak of. It might prove that Germany would be satisfied with a

re-division of the annexed district, cutting it approximately in two. But I never met any Pole, from peasant to premier, who would even consider such a suggestion.

Local revisions of the frontier, to rectify some of the basty injustices of its drafting, are quite possible. Again, I believe that Poland would consider these if she were not haunted by the fear that such "weakness" would impel a demand for more.

The wholesale exchange of populations which we have considered could in this district only be carried out over a long period—you cannot replace a mine manager by a farm labourer. Nevertheless, it is possible in part, and might assist in the eventual pacification of the area.

My readers by this time will be far too wary to treat any exchange of population as a simple problem. It could only be approached under conditions of friendship. At the moment there is a strong Nazi group which denies that there are any Poles in Germany! There may be people of Polish origin, but they have been German for so many years that they have become completely Germanized. This argument surely conflicts with the religion of racial purity! The Jews have been German for far longer than the Poles. If Germany would not admit that she has any Poles, however (and to judge by her process of Germanization this would seem to be a potential argument), then the question of exchange of Germans for Poles can scarcely arise!

But questions other than ethnic are involved. Germany has lost the iron mines of Lorraine and Upper Silesia. *Her production of iron within her own frontiers is not sufficient to sustain a long war.* This is very important. Unless in the first days of a new war Germany was able to overrun Lorraine and Upper Silesia, Germany would have to win the war in six months—or lose it!

I do not recall ever meeting a German who regarded the



fate of Upper Silesia as settled, or a Pole who would consider its amendment. Thus the problem is one of great potential danger. The more showy "Corridor" is the crust of the problem pie, but the meat is to be found in Upper Silesia.

I have mentioned that Marshal Foch and Lord d'Abernon pointed to the "Corridor" as the cause of the next war. But Mr. Lloyd George, who knows something of these problems, has referred to Upper Silesia as Europe's new Alsace-Lorraine.

## V

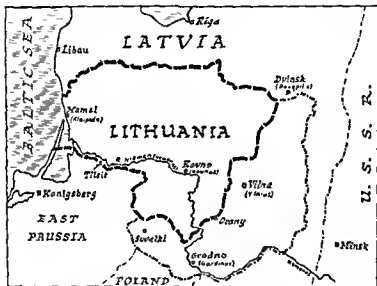
Vilno, or Vilna, or Wilno, or Vilnius, is the centre of the nearest to a concrete example of Problem B. It is also one of the most interesting cities of Europe.

Most intriguing of all religious monuments of Europe is the Ostra Brama of Vilna, a sacred shrine above an ancient gateway. Three times a day the street is closed, and a great service is held before the shrine. As men passed under the archway, they raised their hats, and women curtsied. I saw a battalion of soldiers marching through, and every man raised his cap without order: even Jews removed their hats as they passed this sacred shrine. There is a local legend that it does not matter at what hour of the day or night you pass the Ostra Brama, there will always be someone kneeling in the street. Once I passed at two a.m.: the legend was justified, for there were still two people on their knees. One of them was the policeman on duty.

Napoleon knew Vilna well, it was his first headquarters in his Russian campaign. He fell in love with another of its ecclesiastical monuments, the church of St. Anne. So charming is its delicate Gothic, lace-like in its tracery, that Napoleon threatened to take it down and remove it stone by stone to France. Fortunately for Vilna, when he returned

from Moscow he was in too much of a hurry to think about removing churches.

Lithuania, now but a small State, was once a great Empire, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and Vilna was its capital. The Lithuanians of the Middle Ages were pagans, and had a great reputation as warriors, subduing the Slav tribes in what are now White Russia



FRONTIER BEFORE ZELIGOWSKI'S RAID -----

FRONTIER UNTIL 1938 ———

and the Ukraine. In 1386 the thrones of Lithuania and Poland were united by marriage—at that time Lithuania was three times the size of Poland—and thereafter followed a common destiny.

In the new alliance, the Lithuanians supplied the warriors, the Poles the culture. In particular, Polish monks were dispatched at once to Lithuania to evangelize the people.

They could not speak Lithuanian, but local chroniclers report that the Lithuanian king himself interpreted their sermons! They must have been forceful, for the local people early abandoned their paganism—sacred fires were extinguished and idols destroyed, and in Vilna alone some 30,000 Lithuanians were baptised.

After the union of Lithuania and Poland, however, the political importance of Vilna declined—the Poles knew more of the game of statecraft, and the seat of government was transferred to Cracow, and later to Warsaw. Polish priests, rather naturally, proceeded to Vilna in greater numbers: here was a vast field for missionary and educational work. Polish officials and their families gradually followed. As Polish was the language of the Polish-Lithuanian court, it became the language of the ruling classes in Lithuania. If you wanted to get on, you had to learn Polish; if you wanted education, you had to know Polish to get it. Through succeeding centuries the character of Vilna changed; once predominantly Lithuanian, it became more and more Polish—and many of the remaining Lithuanians spoke Polish as their first or only language, and were already forgetting that they were ever Lithuanian.

In the partition of Poland, Vilna and Lithuania fell to the share of Russia. Vilna now experienced an influx of Russians, including Jews who were not permitted to settle in Russia proper. The city therefore became a glorious ethnic medley, of which its churches to-day bear full witness. They even include a Mohammedan mosque! I found several families of Tartars in the city.

Now although the Lithuanian population of Vilna dwindled, the rural districts round about were predominantly Lithuanian. When the state of Lithuania was re-born—under German "protection"—after the Russian Revolution, she naturally claimed Vilna as her historic capital; her first post-War frontiers—the "Curzon" line—

were well to the south of Vilna. In the confused fighting of the period, the city changed hands several times.

First the Lithuanians lost Vilna in war to the Russians. Three months later it was re-captured—by the Poles! Then the Russians invaded Poland, but were defeated on the Vistula: unable to hold Vilna, they handed back the city and district to the Lithuanians, thus restoring the "Curzon" line. All this happened in 1920.

The League of Nations hoped that this was the end of the matter—the Lithuanians occupied substantially the territory first allocated to them. Such hopes appeared justified when on October 7th, 1920, at Suvalki a military agreement between the Poles and the Lithuanians was signed in the presence of the League's military control commission. The League had apparently scored one of its first successes.

Disillusion followed rapidly. Within two days the Poles had invaded the Vilna region. At first it was explained that the invasion was a private expedition organized by a "rebel" general, Zeligowski, and an army of irregulars. But Zeligowski seized Vilna and Poland held on to it, and it is not now denied even in Poland that the "rebel" was acting on behalf of Poland; the League, indeed, had been suitably bluffed.

The excuse put forward is that most of Zeligowski's men were Poles from the Vilna region—which may be true—and that they could not bear to see their kindred in foreign hands. This explains the raid on Vilna, but it does not explain the signing of an agreement two days earlier.

The Poles claimed that it was purely a military agreement, without any international obligations, but the normal outlook of public opinion is that one form of signed agreement is as binding as another. Poland, which on the whole has played a worthy part in world affairs, lost a great deal

of the world's sympathy by this trick. The Man-in-the-Street has a natural sense of fair play. There is a parallel to one aspect of the Vilna affair in the Abyssinian adventure. The Man-in-the-Street can be persuaded that Mussolini had a *right to march into Abyssinia*, which had been a troublesome neighbour, but he cannot be persuaded that it was right to do so when, a year or so earlier, he had fêted the Emperor in Rome as a friend, and had proposed Abyssinia as a member of the League of Nations—against the opposition of England!

In the case of Vilna, however, the Man-in-the-Street and his statesmen did nothing; they were weary of war and the endless strife in eastern Europe. They were sorry for Lithuania, but that was all. A little firmness, however, and Poland might have compromised—after all, she owed her existence to the Allied victory. The League of Nations, although Lord Cecil described the episode as "an international scandal," after some half-hearted attempts at negotiation, eventually accepted the *fait accompli*, and Vilna remained within the Polish borders.

Two names ought to be written in large black letters on the walls of Geneva—those of Zeligowski and D'Annunzio. These were the men who kicked the League of Nations when it was but an infant, in no condition to retaliate. A few years later, when the League had gathered strength, these adventurers might have met the fate they deserved. The fact that their methods of force were condoned, and the results accepted, were to serve as useful precedents for other and bigger freebooters. The case has been considered under Problem B. Whether Zeligowski acted on Pilsudski's orders, or was impelled by patriotic fervour, he established a dangerous precedent. For my own part, I do not believe the League was as weak as it thought it was: civilized man will always rally to a principle. Whatever its ethnic background, the seizure of

Vilna was a direct breach of international law. If international law is to mean anything at all, it must be enforced. It is no legal argument that I may do wrong because you have done wrong, but it is excellent mental solace. If Hitler ever had any qualms about his seizure of Austria he could at least argue: "Well, I only did what Zeligowski did, and nothing happened to him."

The Lithuanians, outnumbered by ten to one, could do little but brood in their fury. The Poles held an election in the Vilna region, which naturally favoured Poland—the election was of the "arranged" type with which we are now familiar. The election seemed a monstrosity to the Lithuanians at the time, but its conduct was mild compared with that of elections held by more "advanced" nations ten years later.

It will not take us long to decide, I think, that the Polish method of seizing Vilna cannot be justified by any moral standards. But can the seizure itself be justified? Is Vilna Polish?

One thing is certain—Vilna is *not* Lithuanian. To-day the city houses 200,000 inhabitants, and only 5,000 of them are Lithuanian. Vilna is noted as a city of churches—but only one of them is Lithuanian. Even on the basis of the pre-War figures, which perhaps afford a fairer comparison, the Lithuanians (according to their own figures), claim only two per cent of the inhabitants of the city.

For that matter, only thirty per cent of the inhabitants were Polish; forty per cent were Jews, and twenty-five per cent Russians. Vilna is, in fact, an ethnic medley—it is the natural meeting place of the Great Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian tribes. To-day the proportion of Poles is naturally higher, but they are still outnumbered by the Jews. Thus, unless you count Polish Jews as Poles, Vilna can scarcely be described as a Polish city. But that does not make it Lithuanian.

In the surrounding rural district, however, the position is different. When Polish priests and administrators came to Vilna, they settled the city but left the country districts comparatively undisturbed. There were colonies of Russians in the territory, and more came after the partitions. The last pre-War figures show that in some of the eastern districts of the Vilna territory some eighty per cent of the inhabitants are Russians.

The Lithuanians argue that the Russians do not enter into the problem; Russia has not made any claim to the districts—which at the moment is true—so the problem is purely between Lithuanians and Poles. If we accept this assumption, the Lithuanians outnumbered the Poles in the rural areas: even including the city, there were as many Lithuanians as Poles and Jews put together. In one administrative district Lithuanians formed fifty-eight per cent of the whole population, the Poles eleven per cent. Nowhere outside the city, in fact, were the Lithuanians outnumbered by the Poles. It does not follow that national groups are strongest nearest their own frontiers, and in some districts there are strong Lithuanian settlements to the *south* of Vilna. South-west and north-east of Vilna are rural districts which are almost entirely Lithuanian, and further south and east are many districts where the Lithuanians outnumber the Poles. It is only fair to point out that there are many thousands of Poles in the villages on the Lithuanian side of the frontier.

The first obvious question is: to settle all these disputes about population, why was a plebiscite not held at once? The difficulty was, of course, to decide whether the plebiscite should cover town and country together, or separately. Actually two attempts were made by the League to hold a plebiscite. The first failed because both Poland and Lithuania refused to agree to it—both were apparently afraid of losing it! The other reason for the failure was

more dramatic: an international force would of course have been necessary to control the plebiscite, and Russia threatened to make war if any international force assembled near her frontiers! Such are the minor difficulties of diplomacy!

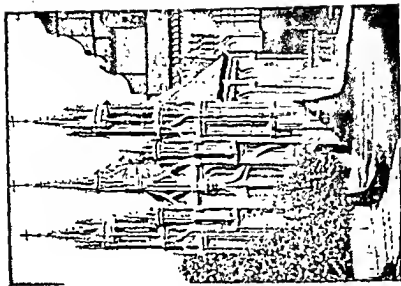
The second attempt was based on a potential close alliance between Poland and Lithuania. This Lithuania refused to agree—she was afraid of being absorbed in a greater Poland.

It was a pretty problem for arm-chair statesmen, but it was desperately serious to Lithuania. The blow to the national pride is intense—a country deprived of her historic capital! At first the world's sympathies were with Lithuania—until she herself legalized the Zeligowski method by the similar seizure of Memel. The same League Conference which confirmed Lithuania in Memel legalized Poland's seizure of Vilna!

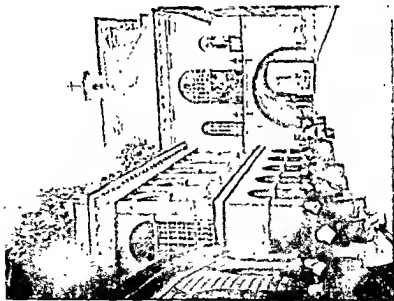
Until 1927 Lithuania and Poland were in a state of intermittent warfare, with daily frontier "incidents" (Lithuania, incidentally, still prints all official maps as including Vilna, and in Kaunas I was officially requested not to refer to the present frontier as the frontier, but as the "temporary administrative line.") Then, one day, Pilsudski went to Geneva; he had none of the artificial graces of diplomacy, and meeting the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Valdemaras, flung at him the stern question: "Well, what do you want—peace or war?" And Valdemaras, representative of a tiny State, could only reply: "Peace."

But it was no more than a truce. Diplomatic relations were not resumed, and the frontier remained closed. When I crossed from Vilna to Kaunas in 1934, I passed along a main road which once carried a heavy traffic; I found it grass-grown—and I found that I was only the fourteenth person to pass that way in twelve years! To make the crossing, my application had to be approved personally by the



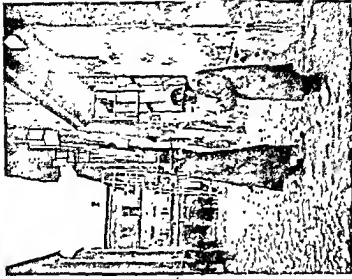


St Anne's, covered by Napoleon

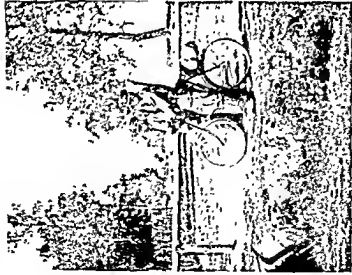


The shrine of Ostra Brama

VILNA



JEWS IN A POLISH GHETTO



THE FORBIDDEN FRONTIER  
POLAND—LITHUANIA

but I had, of course, taken the precaution to photograph it.

The Poles claimed—and I believed them—that they were keenly anxious to resume their old friendly relations with Lithuania. Pilsudski went further—he always looked upon Lithuania as the Scotland to Poland's England. He himself was a Lithuanian from the Vilna territory: Poland's national poet, Mickiewicz, was a Lithuanian. Why not resume the old alliance? said the Poles, again and again. The Lithuanians always declined; they would merely be absorbed in a greater Poland as a very junior partner. In any case, before they would talk about alliances, they wanted Vilna.

It was in connection with Vilna that I made an attempt to figure as an amateur diplomat, and since then I have never envied foreign secretaries. From bitter experience I warn arm-chair statesmen that it is too easy to decide that Poland should do so and so, and Lithuania should accept this and give up that. Logical cold-blooded reasoning is not enough in international affairs. A Spaniard can find a hundred logical and convincing arguments why England should surrender Gibraltar: but England will not surrender Gibraltar, and any thesis based on the surrender of Gibraltar becomes sheer fantasy, however logical its form.

Circumstances so arranged themselves that I was in touch with people who could speak for Poland and Lithuania. With the Pole I had discussed the dangers of Vilna—in Vilna; I pointed out the importance of a friendly Lithuania in the case of combat; of a friendly Lithuania when East Poland catches up West, and becomes a trading country—at the moment it is scarcely exploited, but one day it will need the services of a port like Memel. If at war with Germany, Poland would inevitably lose Danzig and Gdynia, and Lithuanian friendship would then be invaluable.

He agreed with all these arguments, and apart from them all, was very anxious to conciliate Lithuania. He even agreed that the seizure of Vilna was a "trick," but attempted to justify it by the unsatisfactory methods of the League of Nations Commission. Then, for the first time in my life, I found that I had met a *European statesman who was willing to give up portions of his country's territory*. He did not go as far as I would have done, but his outlook was so bold and novel that I took off my hat to him.

I arrived at Kaunas, therefore, with high hopes. Here was an unique opportunity of acting the peacemaker—of stopping up one of Europe's running sores, which might at any moment become a dangerous wound. I had every possible advantage, since I was without official connections of any kind.

It seemed that the question of the frontier might be re-opened with a view to revision. Near Olkienki and Orany, in particular, I had found dozens of Lithuanian villages—these could be returned to Lithuania. It might mean the cutting of the Grodno-Vilna railway, but this problem could be faced; it would be well worth while spending a hundred thousand pounds in settling the Vilna feud. Further to the north-east, too, the Lithuanian frontier could be pushed out as much as ten miles. If desired, Lithuanians outside the new frontier could be repatriated, or exchanged for Poles in Lithuania. Vilna, of course, would remain Polish.

This was at least an excellent compromise, *and I knew that Poland would accept it*. But my high hopes were soon dashed in Kaunas. I was thanked for my interest, but my suggestion was turned down gently but decisively. There could be no permanent settlement without Vilna. "How would you like it," asked a Lithuanian statesman, "if Frenchmen had settled in Winchester, your historic capital: and, although the country round about was English, France seized the county of Hampshire?"

No, Vilna *must* come back to Lithuania, it was explained. No government which agreed otherwise would survive for five minutes—and this, I believe, is true. Vilna may now be Polish, but it is the very heart of Lithuanian history and nationalism.

After the return of Vilna anything was open to discussion—anything, my Lithuanian statesman declared. He fully realized the peculiar position of Poland—the meat in the German-Russian sandwich, and that apart from other considerations the cession of Vilna would mean an important military loss. He was prepared to counter that with a military alliance—so that, in the event of war, not only Vilna but the whole of Lithuania would be with Poland. Trade treaties—equal rights for Poles in Lithuania—*anything* could be discussed and arranged, once Vilna were returned.

Further, it was impressed upon me that the return of Vilna is a matter of concern to Latvia and Estonia—a visiting Latvian minister was hastily summoned to give me his opinion. The point is certainly important. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia form a Baltic Little Entente of some importance and a Polish alliance with it would form a *bloc* which even Germany could not despise.

I argued at length: agreed that the seizure of Vilna was scurvily planned, but nevertheless that Vilna was a Polish city—certainly not Lithuanian. I insisted that the quite informal and unofficial offer I made was unique—no other country had shown the slightest sign of giving up a square yard of ground. Poland's gesture ought not to be abruptly dismissed; but always we stuck at Vilna.

Then I turned to the attack: what was the alternative? I demanded. I was convinced that in no circumstances short of overwhelming defeat in war would Poland surrender Vilna. Did the Lithuanians propose to make war? The answer was no, emphatically. Quite apart from the

inadvisability of making war on a country ten times her size, Lithuania hated the very idea of war—she had suffered enough in the last, when Russians and Germans in turn ravaged the country. (And I ought to add at once that this was a general feeling—I met no one in Lithuania who wanted a war: but then, there are only a few thousands among Europe's millions who do.)

Then, I continued, what did Lithuania propose to do? Wait. What for? A miracle. Was not that hopeless? No. The re-birth of Lithuania was a miracle—that of Poland a greater miracle. Who would have dared to prophesy in 1914 that first Russia and then the Central Powers would be defeated? The defeat of one or the other was certain, but the defeat of both was essential if Poland were to be re-created. Yet the hundred-to-one chance came off—and Pilsudski had foreseen it and had gambled on it. There might be another miracle to-day or to-morrow.

But the Lithuanian idea of a miracle was not very comforting. It involved another European conflagration, with Poland either defeated or buying off Lithuania with Vilna. This solution to the problem is thus precisely that which we are so anxious to avoid.

I learned one lesson from Vilna—that compromise is not enough; if a compromise is to be effective and lasting, only friends can make it.

And, in 1934, no one could claim that Poland and Lithuania were friends—they were scarcely acquaintances. The Forbidden Frontier divided them, the most nervous barrier in Europe.

The foregoing sketch of the Vilna problem was written immediately after my return in 1934, and in spite of recent events I do not feel inclined to amend so much as a phrase.

On March 13th, 1938, two British newspapers published a casual note saying that a Polish soldier had been killed on

the Lithuanian frontier. A Fleet Street friend of mine had been holding one of my articles for over three years, ready for the day when it would be topical—only a date and a name would have to be inserted. The date was March 11th, I 'phoned my friend, and the name of the Polish soldier was Stanislas Serafin. Not that this mattered: what happened was bound to happen—a Polish soldier wandering over the frontier, and being shot dead by a Lithuanian guard either ultra-patriotic or nervous.

My friend was inundated with foreign news from Austria, which deservedly held the centre of the stage, and for two days he refused or was too tired to believe that my warning was as topical as I pretended. Then came news of anti-Lithuanian demonstrations by Polish patriotic societies, of phrases in newspaper accounts which spread anxiety, and of the hurried return of Colonel Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, from a holiday in Italy. Successive reports increased in gravity: that Polish "patriots" were getting out of hand—and that Hitler had hurriedly returned from Austria!

Then a startled Europe learned that Poland had dispatched an ultimatum to Lithuania, couched in terms seldom used in diplomatic correspondence, and demanding an answer within forty-eight hours. The ultimatum, after dealing with the death which had provoked it, went on to demand the immediate resumption of diplomatic and trade relations. No argument was permitted. The Lithuanian Government was to accept it in full and without discussion, otherwise——

Polish troops began to mass at Vilna, and Marshal Smigly-Rydz himself went there. The city was excited by patriotic demonstrations. "Mobilize!" "March on Kovno!" "Liquidate Lithuania!" cried the marchers. Tanks and cavalry moved into position along the frontier. The Polish fleet put to sea.

This was serious enough: had it not been for the more dramatic days in Austria it would have been sensational. But it was seen that this was only the beginning. It was reported that Russia was urging Lithuania to resist—and that Hitler was also massing troops on the Lithuanian frontier. If the Poles seized Kovno (Kaunas), the Germans would seize Memel.

There were excited scenes in Kaunas. There was a considerable section which would have resisted—for Lithuania is one on the Vilna question. But there could only be one end to such a one-sided war, and as German aeroplanes cruised ahead and rumours spread around, the inevitable run on the banks began. The atmosphere was familiar to old hands—it was exactly the tension which precedes a war.

The diplomatic corps got busy—they at least knew the dangers of the situation. The British and French Ministers in Lithuania took urgent action, maybe countering that of Russia. By one report, Russia withdrew at the last minute her offer of aid. At any rate, Lithuania capitulated, and on March 19th the Polish terms were accepted. The following day soldiers began to fill in the trenches in the road over which I had passed.

I think the Lithuanians were wise. A grievance they certainly had, but it was rather childish to break off all communications with Poland for so long. For—and this is important—the resumption of diplomatic relations with Poland does not to any degree imply acceptance of the position of Vilna. Colonel Beck promised on behalf of Poland to respect Lithuanian rights and independence—but be left no doubt that if the ultimatum had been rejected the Polish army would have marched into Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Government resigned, but was reformed—its people could not blame it for the surrender to the threat of overwhelming force. It soon became evident



that Poland's victory was bollow. The Lithuanian Government would establish formal relations, and would open the frontier to trade, hut no more. The problem of Vilna is precisely in the same position as before; and, except that the "Forbidden Frontier" has now been opened, my sketch stands in all its details.

Far more important than the result was the method employed. One Polish publicist protested that they had been too lenient in their demands: "having decided to adopt German methods, we should have done a thorough job while we were at it." The adoption of the German method has lost Poland a lot of friends—method is as important as cause. The Polish case may have been perfectly sound, but the suggestion of force diverted attention from the principle to the execution. If justice is merely a matter of big nations making demands on little nations, backed by overwhelming force, then there is little hope for the peace of the world.

Poland's answer to charges of intimidation is interesting. It is not generally known that during January and February 1938, negotiations were actually in progress between Poland and Lithuania on the subject of the resumption of relations. They had progressed so favourably that it had even been settled which diplomats should re-open the legations at Warsaw and Kaunas. Then the Lithuanians suddenly broke off the conversations, and Poland suspected foreign backing.

The seizure of Austria made the question urgent. There is a strong belief in Poland that the next European war has actually begun (we shall discuss this later), and that the advance on Austria was a jockeying for position. In *any* war Poland's access to the sea would be perilous, and an unfriendly Lithuania on her flank was dangerous. She determined to force the Lithuanians to complete the negotiations which had so suddenly been abandoned. Hence the

sudden, blunt ultimatum. There is something in this argument; although the idea of forcing people to be friends is a fantastic one, the ultimate results will probably be beneficial. Nevertheless, democracies do not like rule by ultimatum.

There is a chance for Poland to redeem her character. If she means all she says about her desire to win Lithuania's friendship, let her prove it. No one would ever suggest that she should return Vilna, but dozens of villages and 60,000 Lithuanians could be re-joined to their own country by a stroke of the pen. It would never compensate for Vilna, but it would be a sign of sincere desire for friendship.

"The problem of Vilna," said a Polish statesman to me, "is very like that of Ulster. Whatever Mr. de Valera says about a united Ireland, everybody knows that Ulster will never throw in its lot with him. That is not conjecture, it is *certain*. Ulster is all for closer relations with Britain, while de Valera is far away. Now if he *does* want a united Ireland the only way he can get it is by coming as near to Britain as Ulster is. If his relations with Britain were as close and cordial as Ulster's are, then there is no sound argument why Ulster and Ireland should remain apart. But with present relations there is simply no chance whatever of a united Ireland. That is, the action has to come from *him*, since Ulster will never move in his direction. So it is with Vilna. We want the friendship of the Lithuanians—but they have to move towards us. Vilna is intensely loyal to Poland: when Lithuania is prepared to look upon Poland with the same eyes, then the obstacle to re-union disappears."

I protested that this was really equivalent to the absorption of Lithuania in Poland.

"No, it is not," he said. "Watch the situation carefully during the next few months—maybe the next few years. If Lithuania is sulky, then the atmosphere will not be

pretty. But if Lithuania will forget her grievances and work side by side with Poland, she will have no cause for complaint."

Herr Hitler and his methods may have disquieted some areas of Europe, but generally they have acted as a remarkable unifier. In May 1939, occurred an event which could have been classed as fantastic two years before—General Rashtikis, the Lithuanian Chief-of-Staff, visited Warsaw for diplomatic and military talks. He was decorated with a Polish order, the highest mark of distinction, and on his return stated that his visit "had resulted in a very close friendship between the two countries, revealing a complete identity of view."

For by this time Lithuania had felt the first grip of German pressure—and Memel had been seized. There were ominous signs that this was only the beginning—the parallel of Czechoslovakia was only too obvious. It is perfectly true that "complete identity of view" does exist between Poland and Lithuania so far as Germany is concerned. With Lithuania as well as Czechoslovakia under German control, the circle around Poland would be more than half complete. For Lithuania the question is of her very existence.

Since the seizure of Memel, Lithuania has stood up gallantly to Germany. Her leaders have announced their intention to fight if their territory is invaded. Even the loss of Memel, Lithuania's only port, has been squarely faced. After promising full use of the port, Germany then stated that Memel would be unnecessary to Lithuania, since in future all her trade would be with Germany. Lithuania, however, was of no mind to become a puppet economic state, and promptly diverted her export trade through Latvian ports. Her action was effective. She was again promised a free zone in Memel, together with the sole use of a new port to be created two miles further south.

Nevertheless, Lithuania could not stand alone against Germany. Her only possible ally was Poland. The loss of the ancient capital was serious enough, but insignificant compared with the potential complete loss of her independence. So Lithuania recalled the days when she was as close to Poland as Scotland to England, and once again sought Polish friendship. It was a highly sensible move, and of resounding importance. A potential danger to Poland has been removed, a potential ally gained—a double advantage. With sound statesmanship and a policy of mutual trust and appeasement, a new bond may be formed in this troubled corner of Europe—one of the most vital links in the chain of peace.

## VI

Very few of us had ever heard of the Ukraine before the War. We have heard a lot about it since, but still have not heard the last.

In the great days of Poland and Lithuania, their empires included many thousands of Ruthenes, a Slav tribe claiming near kinship with both Poles and Russians. The Ruthenes were unhappy under the Polish and Lithuanian rule—they were treated as little more than serfs—and many of them emigrated to the basin of the Dnieper. Here, although still nominally under Polish-Lithuanian rule, they were too far away from the centre of things to be oppressed. They formed themselves into free democratic communities, and came to be known as Cossacks. Only the lightest of bonds connected these communities, who found a plentiful livelihood on the rich steppes of black earth. A nominal tribute to their theoretical overlords was paid, but the parent hold over the new colony was of the slightest. The Ruthenes mixed freely with the sparse local population of Russians, and with later immigrants, and eventually the whole province came under Russian rule—that part east

of the Dnieper in 1667, and the remainder in 1793, during the partitions of Poland.

The Russians considered the Ruthenes as Russians, and accorded them the liabilities and privileges of Russians: they were generally known as "South Russians." Their language differed somewhat from Russian—but by no more than did Great Russian from White Russian, or any of the



THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE UKRAINIANS

dozens of dialects in common use in Russia. For generations the Ruthenes themselves had no other idea, and Russians still claim that Ruthene is no more than a Russian dialect. Certainly a Russian can converse with a Ruthene with ease, for I have heard it done on dozens of occasions.

But in the middle of the last century there arose in the Ukraine a new movement of national consciousness. As so

often happens with the Slav peoples, the driving force was not a politician, but a poet. Just as Mickiewicz rallied the Poles, so Shevchenko passionately poured out the claims of the Ruthenes to independent nationality: Ruthene culture was assiduously preached; the rich Ruthene folklore was revived and embellished. The new movement went much further, however—it demanded the political union of all the Ruthenes.

Now before the War the Ruthene tribe was split between Russia and Austria. When Russia seized the western half of the Ukraine during the partitions of Poland, Austria seized Galicia, the eastern portion of which housed some three million Ruthenes—there were twenty-five million of them in the Ukraine. Political union at that time, however was most unlikely, to put it mildly. No sane person could possibly imagine that Austria would give up Eastern Galicia to the Ruthenes; still less likely was it that Russia would give up the rich province of the Ukraine.

The War, however, altered the outlook. Anything might happen—and it did. On the collapse of Russia, the Ruthenes of the Ukraine elected a national council. This was recognized by the Bolsheviks *and by the Germans*, and the Ukraine sent a separate delegation to Brest-Litovsk, and negotiated a separate peace with Germany and Austria. This is important—the first appearance of the Ukraine as a national state in history.

The Germans attached great importance to the treaty with the Ukraine—they were desperately short of food-stuffs, and the Ukraine is a vast granary. When the Bolsheviks decided that the Ukraine, after all, was really a part of Russia, German and Austrian troops marched into the Ukraine to keep out the Bolsheviks and to safeguard the invaluable supplies of food. For a few brief months, therefore, even if under foreign "protection," there did exist an independent Ukraine.

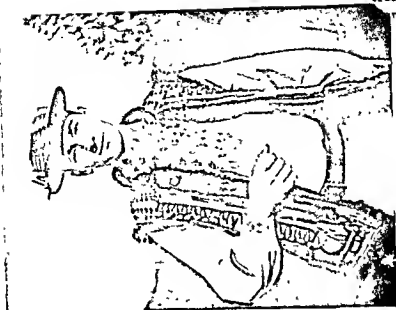
Ukrainians, most of them in North America, but with small numbers in England and France.

There remains, however, the danger that the Ukrainian dreams of one united country of the Ukrainians may take a new form. If it is not practicable to found an independent Ukraine, why not extend the borders of the present Ukrainian Republic? This idea finds expression especially among the new Ukrainian generation, bred on Communist ideas and ideals. Why not extend the benefits of Communism to their brothers over the Polish border, groaning under the capitalist yoke? For some years the missionary zeal of the Communists has been restrained: the necessity for foreign intercourse and the vastness of their own problems induced the Russian leaders to forgo their plans for the conversion of the world. But to-day Russia is almost independent, and the new generation is in part fiercely propagandist—and has the crudest notions of life in a democratic country. It may be that we shall shortly witness a revival of Communist missionary enterprise: indeed, my own opinion, formed on the spot, is that it can only be restrained by the exigencies of foreign affairs. If this is correct, then Eastern Galicia—the Polish portion of the Ukraine—is one of the first available fields of penetration.

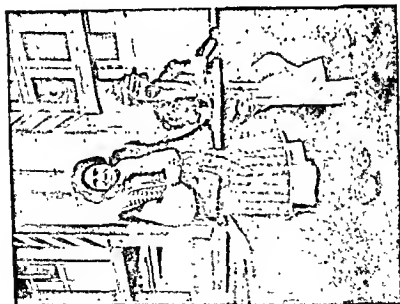
There are three million Ukrainians in Poland, contiguous to the present frontier. But—and this is important—they are hopelessly mixed with Poles. Over the whole of Galicia there are five million Poles, but in the eastern half—the part under discussion—the Poles form only forty per cent of the population, even counting Polish Jews as Poles. Speaking generally, the Poles are preponderant in the infrequent towns, the Ukrainians in the country. This is a parallel case, in fact, to that of Vilna. The capital of Eastern Galicia, Lwow (the old Lemberg) is unquestionably a Polish city, yet it is surrounded by a peasant population of Ukrainians.

mistress

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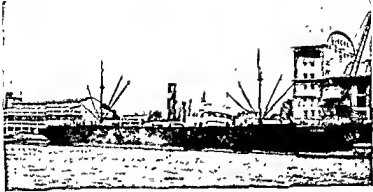


UKRAINIAN PEASANTS



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(Above) MEMEL, OR KLAIPEDA

(Below) Should statesmen investigate problems on the spot? A main road on the Polish-Russian frontier

For years after the War there was discontent and distress among the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia. There were stories of outrage and murder, and not all of them were exaggerated. Galicia under the Austrians had enjoyed a liberal measure of home rule, and some people expected the Poles to continue this: they were disappointed. I rode a bicycle along the appalling dust-tracks of the Galician countryside. (If, as some people claim, statesmen ought to investigate problems on the spot, I can only say that we ought to breed a special race of athlete-statesmen for investigations in eastern Europe. In this corner of Europe I wallowed for days among sand, and then sank in the mud of the Pripet Marshes.)

There is no need to report my own impressions of the troubles in Eastern Galicia—if you will recall the days of the Black and Tans in Ireland you have a picture exactly parallel—a murdered policeman, reprisals, burned cottages, and so on. Happily those days are now over, and since 1930 a more efficient administration has pacified the frontier provinces. Since 1934 the district has been remarkably quiet—until the autumn of 1938!

The date 1934 seems to crop up in the discussion of all Polish problems—the date of the Ten-Year Pact with Germany. The fact is that most Polish troubles were aggravated or instigated by Germany prior to that date. Presumably to weaken Poland with a view to the recovery of the "Corridor," German influence could be traced in most Polish affairs. The famous "Ukrainian Bureau," which fomented many of the disturbances in Eastern Galicia, is claimed by the Poles as being a German creation, and it is significant that its activities diminished abruptly in 1934. The Ten-Year Pact may have been policy for Hitler, but it was a godsend to Poland, which needed a breathing space so badly.

My own impression is that there is no serious demand

for union with the Soviet Ukraine. Most of the Galician peasants have a strip of land of their own, and this is to them far more than a share in a collective farm. Nevertheless, there is still a demand for some form of local autonomy, and the Poles would be wise to heed it. It was brought into the open again by the grant of autonomy to Ruthenia by Czechoslovakia. Ruthenia is the cradle of the Ukrainian race—indeed, is sometimes considered as the cradle of the entire Slav race. The Ruthenes are Ukrainians.

In October 1938, there were serious riots and disturbances in Eastern Galicia—the Polish Ukraine—fanned if not provoked by a wave of propaganda from German-controlled Ruthenia. The Ukrainians demanded the same rights of self-government as their brothers, the Ruthenes. They pointed out that the Poles had posed as the prophets of self-determination in Teschen, and what was right for Poles in Teschen was surely right for Ukrainians in Poland. This sounds reasonable enough, but the forcible expression of the claim was vigorously repressed, with much loss of life. Blood does not make a people forget its grievances, but perpetuates the memory.

The career of Ruthenia as a self-governing state was woefully brief. With the seizure of Czechoslovakia by Germany, Ruthenia was overrun by Hungary. Some form of autonomy has been promised—but the dream of Ruthenia as the germ of an independent Ukraine has been rudely dispelled.

In any case, the same series of events had its effects on opinion in Polish Ukraine. When, in April 1939, it appeared that Poland was to be the next victim of aggression, the Ukrainians hastened to express their loyalty to Poland, offering their services in its defence: agitation for autonomy was temporarily dropped. But only temporarily. When the moment of release from tension arises, the problem is bound to arise again, and it would pay the Poles to take a liberal view.

Poland is an enigmatic country to the outside observer. Its stock is fine, a democratic peasantry—which is almost unrepresented in the Sejm; most of the popular parties boycott the elections, so dissatisfied are they at their working. At present Poland is governed by a semi-authoritarian bloc which cannot profess to represent the country as a whole, though the Polish people are overwhelmingly behind its policy of co-operation with the Western democracies. The President has recently announced, however, that new legislation is contemplated towards a democratic suffrage. If it comes, the political face of Poland is likely to change rapidly—towards the democratic side. At present the electoral system is quite unworthy of so great a country. Suffrage is open, but all candidates are selected by special assemblies appointed by the government, and no others may stand. Naturally, only candidates who support the government are chosen. Thus, if you are a Socialist or Liberal—or a Ukrainian—you might as well not have a vote at all.

## VII

But I imagine that some of my readers have followed with some surprise my skeleton outline of the problem of the Ukraine. To them the problem is, not whether there should or should not be an independent Ukraine, but whether there shall be a German colony there. Presumably because the Germans occupied the Ukraine in 1918, the question of their return has been frequently mooted. The usual supposition is that Germany and Poland would unite to attack Russia, and would seize the Ukraine. A considerable portion, including Odessa, would be handed over to Poland in compensation for the "Corridor," which would become German again.

This is the kind of scheme which appears so easy in words. It presupposes (a) that Poland would fight beside

Germany, with the knowledge that if she won she might easily become a vassal state of Germany, and if she lost she would almost certainly become a Socialist Soviet Republic. If Poland joined Germany to make war on Russia she would simply be erecting her own gallows; (b) that Germany and Poland would defeat Russia. This is so far from being certain that it ought never to be assumed. I saw things in Russia which were not all impressive, but my impression of the Red Army is that it is tremendously strong—on its own ground it may be undefeatable: its only weakness lies in its communications, and in a defensive war this would handicap attackers equally; (c) that Poland would surrender the "Corridor" area.

Each of the three premises is, in fact, very improbable; the last one, indeed, unthinkable. When you have three improbable suppositions which are inter-dependent, the net result is not likely to be positive, to say the least. It may be that in some German minds there are vague dreams of conquest. It may be that the alleged Anti-Comintern Pact is preliminary propaganda for eventual predatory action—for no sane person outside Germany, Italy or Japan believes the pact to be what it says it is. Only a few years ago Germany was considering an alliance with Soviet Russia, and if one were offered in the future on attractive terms there is no guarantee that it would not be accepted if the circumstances were propitious. No vast quantity of water flowed under Rome's bridges since Mussolini made that Polish speeches about U.S.S.R.

Ukrainians & immediate purpose, however, I do not think we offering their sides ourselves unduly about a German conquest of was temporarily In the early days of the War strategists proved the moment of re-ance of the Dardanelles—how their capture bound to arise again War by months or years. They were liberal view. but unfortunately we failed to force the

same way the advantages to Germany

if she controlled the vast resources of the Ukraine are obvious, but this is not quite the same thing as obtaining that control.

Until 1939 Poland's policy was an obvious one—of creating a neutral *bloc* between Germany and Russia. This might have been a useful contribution to European peace, but the seizure of Czechoslovakia made neutrality impossible—particularly when the next obvious victim was Poland.

Recent diplomatic activities have drawn attention to the peculiar difficulties of Poland. Threatened by Germany, she was apparently reluctant to accept Russian help. Yet history shows that the reluctance is not loosely founded: The Poles are no more anxious to entertain Russian soldiers than German. The last time Germans and Russians entered Poland, it took 150 years to get them out again. In any case we have seen that Poland can supply her own masses of infantry. The only support she would need from Russia would be aircraft, technical troops and supplies.

After their defeat before Warsaw, the internal difficulties of the Bolsheviks were intense—they had to have peace at almost any price. Consequently they agreed to a frontier fifty miles east of the old one, and at least fifty miles east of the nearest ethnic line, especially in the north. Thus in addition to the three million Ukrainians, there are a million and a half White Russians in Poland. In their case, too, there do not exist the complications of Eastern Galicia, where Poles and Ukrainians are hopelessly mixed. It would be easily possible to redraft the Polish-Russian frontier so that two million White Russians and Ukrainians were restored to Russia—if they wished—at a loss of only 100,000 Poles. If Hitler was entitled to dominate the Germans of Czechoslovakia, then Stalin is equally interested in the Russians of Poland. There is one considerable difference: the Germans of Czechoslovakia asked Hitler for his

interest, the Russians of Poland have not asked Stalin. Indeed, half a million of them are refugees from Soviet rule. It is up to Poland to see that they never have cause to ask Stalin. Extravagant promises appeal to a man who has nothing to lose, but a satisfied peasant will snap his fingers at Stalin.

It is good to record that relations between Poland and Russia show signs of rapid improvement—again as a result of Nazi diplomacy. (Hitler, instead of acting on the sage principle “divide and rule,” has managed to unite a queer assortment of opponents.) If Poland and Russia can work out a scheme of mutual collaboration, it is quite certain that Hitler’s much publicized project of a vassal Ukraine state must be indefinitely postponed.

#### VIII

In the course of my wanderings about Poland I stayed for a few days at the members’ hostel attached to the House of Parliament in Warsaw. There I was amazed to find that a leading topic of conversation was not the Polish “Corridor,” but the Palestine Mandate.

There are nearly three and a half million Jews in Poland—one-tenth of the entire population of the country. Not all of them, by any means, can be classed as “Polish Jews”; under the old Russian Empire, practically all Jews were compelled by a series of enactments to live in the “Pale of Settlement”—the western provinces—and consequently Poland received as settlers hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews. The Jews in Poland have retained their race, culture and religion to a remarkable degree, and a walk through the ghettos of Warsaw or Cracow is like a visit to a legendary world. In Western Poland their numbers are not overwhelming, but in the towns of the east they are very strong: in Lwow and Vilna they number forty per cent of the inhabitants, and in Pinsk as much as seventy per cent!

The re-born Poland found the greater part of its commercial life in Jewish hands—the distributive trades almost entirely so. In the old days of Polish glory, Poland had no middle class—only aristocrats and peasants: the aristocrats were often peasants promoted for valour in battle, but they must never engage in trade. The Jews were invited by successive Polish kings to settle in the country, to supply the missing link. Poland was for them a happy hunting ground: aristocrats were forbidden to trade, and peasants never do, so the Jews flourished.

But the new Poland has no snobbish views on trade, and wants to control its own commerce. There has been no organized persecution of the Jew, as in Germany, but of late years he has not been particularly happy. Sometimes there have been local "incidents," where peasants have attacked the man who held their mortgages; there have been occasional minor outbursts by irresponsible hotheads who imagine themselves to be budding Hitlers. But until recently most of the misery of the Jews has been purely economic.

Polish firms—sometimes with Government backing—are driving the Jews from the trading field: even in the rural districts the Jewish trader is being driven out of business by the new co-operative societies. The "poor Jew" has become one of Poland's thorniest problems. I emphasize again, there is no organized pogrom against the Jews—at the moment: you will find Jews of brilliant attainments in the highest ranks of Polish culture, science, and commerce. But in bad times it is too easy to blame the Jew for everything; it is not difficult for a Polish trader to incite a boycott of his Jewish competitor. I do not expect that there ever will be a wholesale expulsion of the Jews, but three and a half millions are too many for Poland.

This is no simple question—there *is* a Jewish problem in Poland. It scarcely existed in Germany, where the few



hundred thousand Jews had adopted German manners, had freely intermarried with Germans, and were in many cases indistinguishable from Germans. In Poland the Jews are a race apart, with their own culture, religion, and costume. Except for the professional class, it is impossible to mistake a Jew for anybody else—and he does not intend you to mistake him. He has never become assimilated into the local population, as in Western Europe.

The problem is accentuated by the restriction of emigration. Before the War an average of 250,000 emigrants left Poland every year. Since the War the numbers have been negligible—since the United States, the principal field for emigration, has been closed: on the contrary, hundreds of thousands of emigrants have returned to Poland. The economic situation in Poland is severe, due to the effects of the world "crisis." There are no official figures, but there must be two million unemployed in Poland—a serious proportion of the population. Over one million peasants lack that strip of land which means life to them. When there is so much to be done, and so little money available, it is only natural (argues the Polish Government) that the Poles should have the first choice, and the Jews must take anything that is left. It is not entirely the fault of the Poles that there isn't much left.

What can be done with the Polish Jews? In the past years ten thousand a year have emigrated to Palestine—the Polish Government operates a special shipping line direct to Palestine from Roumanian ports. Tens of thousands more would be sent, but for the maximum quota allowed by the British Government. I found in Poland a poor understanding of the position, and a growing suggestion that Poland, as the greatest Jewish country, should take over the Palestine mandate.

A group of members of the Sejm—the Polish parliament—invited me to address them. I accepted, thinking

that they would be interested to hear an Englishman's casual view of the Polish "Corridor." But I found, to my concern, that they wanted me to speak about the Palestine Mandate.

I know no more of this subject than the next man—this was before the recent troubles enlarged our knowledge—and have never been to Palestine, but one or two arguments were obvious. I pointed out that the Balfour Declaration did more than proclaim a National Home for the Jews—it confirmed the rights of the Arabs in Palestine. There arose also the question as to which was the more binding—the Balfour Declaration or Lawrence's pledge to the Arabs on Britain's behalf. Unconsciously I strayed into prophecy by saying that undue haste or swamping of Palestine with Jews would be certain to arouse violent resentment among the Arabs—with serious repercussions throughout the Moslem world, in which Britain was vitally and intimately interested. This solution of the Polish Jewish problem, therefore would only create others much vaster and more dangerous.

I added a severely practical argument—that Britain, having recently constructed a most expensive oil pipe line from Iraq, could scarcely be expected to hand over the control of its vital coastal terminus to another Power, however friendly.

I think I was able to persuade my hearers that the idea of a Polish Mandate for Palestine was out of the question, and should be abandoned. The fact that the Polish outlook has now changed has, of course, nothing to do with what I said, but to a gradual realization of facts. The recent Arab troubles in Palestine should have settled the question once and for all.

But the problem of the Jews remains. It deserves to be solved, for both the Polish Government and Jews have approached it with a toleration markedly absent in other ethnic problems. To-day another suggestion is made that

a huge colony of Jews should be planted in one of the undeveloped South American countries. Poland of course, would part with them for good, and could never claim any territorial rights in the country concerned—their emigration would be on the same footing as if to the United States; anyway, there is always the Monroe doctrine.

This scheme is sound. Several South American states have received block settlements of Europeans, to the profit of both. They might easily be persuaded to do it again. Thousands of the Jews of Poland would go—in all corners of Poland I was besieged by Jews anxious for me to pull strings whereby they would be included in the next Palestine quota. It is a solution which could be worked out amicably, with suffering to none. There is really only one small drawback: who is going to pay the tremendous cost, and how?

It is quite certain that Poland cannot solve her Jewish problem alone. If territory became available, either the League of Nations or the richer Powers will have to help financially. There would probably be little difficulty on this score, for it is recognized that the problem is becoming urgent. Crossing Poland again in 1937, I was appalled at the change in atmosphere. Four years earlier Poland had appeared as the champion of the Jews, standing up to Germany. The Ten-Year Pact altered that attitude, though the Polish Government remains scrupulously correct in its outlook. The trouble is that people are getting out of hand. The repercussions of ruthless German propaganda are bound to have their effects in Poland. Picketing of Jewish shops is common. The younger irresponsible elements are imbibing the impression that it is "patriotic" to beat up Jews. I saw a gang of students in Warsaw following a group of castaned Jews to the synagogue, jeering and jibing. When one of the exasperated Jews turned on these heroes, he was roughly handled, and only the timely intervention of the police saved him from a worse fate. These incidents were

for a time all too common in Poland. If they are what they appear to be—an indication of worse to come—then the outlook is not bright. I hesitate to prophesy, but I suggest that the Jewish problem is likely to be one of Europe's outstanding difficulties within the next ten years. And the Jewish problem is really a Christian problem.

## IX

Memel is not strictly a Polish problem, but it is appropriate to consider it here. It is a problem which might now be considered as solved by the short-sighted. An outline of its difficulties might prove useful or even invaluable for future consideration.

Memel is a Baltic port which up to 1918 represented the eastern extremity of the German Empire.<sup>1</sup> Behind it, on the right bank of the Niemen, is a strip of territory associated with Memel historically and economically. This area, at the time occupied by Lithuanian and Lettish tribes, was conquered by the Teutonic Knights during the thirteenth century. Pursuing their "missionary" enterprise—for the local inhabitants were pagans—the Knights murdered or expelled such as would not accept Christianity, and portions of the land were temporarily depopulated.

Memel itself, however, became a flourishing port, a member of the Hanseatic League. Despite attacks and even occupations by Lithuanians, Poles, Swedes and Russians, the port remained German in population and character. Its importance, however, declined after the partition of Poland, for the greater part of its natural hinterland was included in Russia, and trade was artificially diverted through Russian ports.

The seacoast at first envisaged for the recreated Lithuania after the War consisted of a few miles of sandy coast, devoid of a port and almost of the possibility of constructing a

<sup>1</sup> See map, page 347.

port. Fatigued with their labours on major problems, the Powers at Paris postponed this one. By the Treaty of Versailles (Article 99) Germany was required to cede the Memel territory—the land east of the River Niemen—and undertook to accept its ultimate disposal, as eventually decided by the Allies. An Allied Commission, with French troops, occupied the territory, and there was a prevalent idea that Memel would eventually assume the same status as Danzig—a free city, but it is interesting to note that maritime rights were thought to be intended for Poland: at that time indeed, Lithuania had not been recognized by the victorious Powers.

The Lithuanians, however, had different views. They had heard much of the awkwardness of the Danzig situation; they had learned much from the Polish seizure of Vilna. The Powers help those who help themselves, they argued, and were peculiarly susceptible to the *fait accompli*, as Vilna had proved. We must not blame the Allied Powers too heavily for their weakness: their nations were weary of war, and desired peace even at the expense of justice. What would have happened to a British Government which sent an army to fight for Memel in 1922? Nor was the Polish coup at Vilna the only exemplar for the Lithuanians—the raid on Memel was directly prompted by the French march into the Ruhr.

On January 10th, 1923, Memel witnessed a strange scene. The French garrison, which had come to hold Memel against Germany on behalf of Lithuania, found itself surrounded by a menacing Lithuanian army! Outnumbered and not very interested, the French troops surrendered, and evacuated the port. The whole Memel-land area was immediately occupied by the Lithuanians, who promptly presented their *fait accompli* to the Powers. It was represented at first as a spontaneous rising of the rural population against the occupation of the Powers, but I never met

any Lithuanian who believed this fiction, or any Memellander who "spontaneously rose." An Allied Commission decided very definitely that the raid was planned and executed by the Lithuanian Government.

The gamble came off—the challenge was not accepted. Memel and its hinterland—about 1,000 square miles—were formally handed over to Lithuania, subject to a measure of local autonomy—Memel was to be a self-governing unit under Lithuanian sovereignty, and with a governor appointed by the Lithuanian president. This solution was finally accepted by all parties, and the problem of Memel was born. Few even among the sponsors of the scheme imagined that they had heard the last of Memel. Signor Nitti, more detached in this instance than other politicians of the day, described Memel as "one of the greatest blunders of the peace treaty."

It is only fair to the legislators of the time to point out another of their difficulties. Lithuania was still smarting over the legitimate grievance in the Polish seizure of Vilna, her ancient capital—dealt with in another chapter. The ratification of the Polish occupation of Vilna was under contemplation, and it may easily be that the desire to give some sort of compensation to Lithuania may have created some slight bias in the minds of the Conference which arranged the settlement. No plebiscite was held, but a travelling commission formed the view that union with Lithuania was *not* desired. This was a reasonable conclusion. The Germans were in a slight majority in the district, and it cannot be assumed that every Lithuanian would have voted for incorporation within Lithuania. (Indeed, subsequent elections show that quite a number of them would not—many thousands of Lithuanians voted for an *autonomous* Memel-land.)

Such, very briefly, is the history of the problem; now for the problem itself. The German case is perfectly clear:

here was a stretch of territory which had been under German rule for centuries, suddenly separated from the Fatherland by a dictated Treaty, merely to give Lithuania a port. True, there were Lithuanians in the country districts, but Memel was and is overwhelmingly German. It was utterly wrong to put Germans under the rule of a lower civilization—for the autonomy clauses were ignored by the Lithuanians as soon as their sovereignty was assured. If it were essential to give Lithuania an outlet to the sea, then she could have been granted special rights in Memel, as Czechoslovakia had in other German ports. At the most, Memel should have become a free city on the Danzig basis.

According to the last German pre-War figures, the population of the territory was 141,000. Of these fifty-one per cent spoke German as their first language, forty-eight per cent Lithuanian, and one per cent were Poles, Jews or other races. (We have seen that language is no sure guide to race, but as the German argument is founded upon it, we will accept it here for the present.) But, say the Germans, these Lithuanians are not real Lithuanians—they are no more than a tribe distantly removed; their culture and religion are German, as might be expected when their forefathers have been under German rule for 600 years. It is further claimed that the percentages quoted above are misleading, since many German families speak Lithuanian as their first language! In mixed marriages between German men and Lithuanian women, it is asserted, the resultant families usually speak Lithuanian!

This is a remarkable claim, and would appear to admit that Lithuanian tradition and culture in the district are stronger than German. The idea of German fathers bringing up their children *in Germany* to speak Lithuanian seemed so amazing as to demand investigation. The district is not large, and I made independent inquiries, but I was unable to discover a solitary case.

Nor can I agree that the Memel Lithuanians are not Lithuanians. Naturally, long generations under German rule have introduced German words into the language and German thoughts into the mind. But no country consists of one pure stock—Germany not excepted. If the German arguments were accepted, Bretons and Normans are not real Frenchmen, Devonians and Northumbrians are not real Englishmen—and Bavarians are not real Germans. The Lithuanians of Memel speak Lithuanian, say that they are Lithuanian, and are generally perfectly happy to be incorporated in Lithuania.

I have no quarrel with the German figures. At the present time the Lithuanian proportion has naturally increased, but if at the moment of handing-over you considered the population of Memel on a fifty-fifty basis, you would not be very far wrong. But, unfortunately for those who have tidy minds, the two races were not neatly divided. Of the 71,000 Germans in the territory, over half are to be found in the town of Memel itself. Thus Lithuanians easily predominate in the country districts, though they generally form the lower classes of the population.

This makes clear the Lithuanian argument. Here is a rural territory contiguous to Lithuania with a big preponderance of Lithuanians—of course, it should be joined to the mother country. But if the territory comes to Lithuania, then the port of Memel must come too—admittedly it is largely German, but it has no place in the world if it is separated from its territory. In any case, to a developing country like Lithuania, a port is essential, and Memel is the only possibility.

You must make up your mind as to the cession—the district bears a strong resemblance to that of Problem B. The Lithuanians, however, now added another argument which at least has substantial foundation. Before the War Memel was a sleepy timber port, serving little more than



its own limited hinterland. Now, as the sole port of Lithuania, it was infinitely more prosperous than ever before; its wharves were extended, and its tonnage handled more than doubled. Why could not the Germans be happy in this new prosperity?

But the Germans of Memel were not happy—I was soon convinced of that. They complained bitterly of Lithuanian “oppression,” although they brought it on themselves. For the Memel scheme to work smoothly, cordial co-operation between Germans and Lithuanians was essential, and from the very first moment the Germans refused to co-operate. Do not blame them too hardly. Suppose the Germans had won the War and had annexed Dover. Would the people of Dover have co-operated very willingly with the Germans?

The freely elected council allotted to the territory under the autonomy clauses was a farce from its inception. It had a German majority, and after a few violent rows the Lithuanian members declined to attend. Thereupon the Lithuanian Government declared the local council non-effective, and for most practical purposes Memel has been treated as an ordinary portion of Lithuania.

The language difficulty was intense—there is a big gap between the German and Lithuanian tongues. With conciliation on both sides, the difficulty could have been overcome. But the Germans declined to have anything to do with the Lithuanian language: this action, if unwise, was at least understandable, for the Germans of Memel had been incorporated in Lithuania against their will. The Lithuanian Government, however, decided with some justice that its own employees ought to speak Lithuanian, and ordered officials, policemen, postmen and the like to learn it. Most of them refused; the time limit was extended again and again, but in 1934 and 1935 large numbers of Government employees who still proved obdurate were

at last dismissed. Naturally they became martyrs on the spot—and they and their friends became doubly sensitive to “patriotic” propaganda from Germany.

The resistance of the Germans may perhaps be justified on patriotic grounds, but it was bound to provoke retaliatory measures. A government is at least entitled to claim that its own employees shall understand the language in which its orders are issued. The dismissed Germans were very largely replaced by Lithuanians, and Memel was full of anomalies. I found Lithuanian teachers in charge of German children—the scholars understanding scarcely a word the teachers spoke. I saw people in post offices wandering from *guichet* to *guichet* in search of a penny stamp, unable to read the indicative notices above. Memel itself lost its ancient name, and became Klaipeda.

Both sides must share the blame for the unhappy atmosphere in Memel. It very nearly resulted in open combat in 1934. The news of the attempted Nazi *putsch* in Memel passed almost unnoticed in Europe, for it came at the same moment as the murder of Dolfuss. There was a widespread German plot to seize the town and hold it for Germany. Unhappily for the plotters, one of their number “squeaked” to the Lithuanian Government, and the rising was suppressed before it began. There were wholesale arrests, but only one casualty—the “squeaker.”

His end was peculiar. He was seized by the infuriated plotters, hustled into a motor-car, and hurried towards the German frontier. He was given such lurid hints as to what awaited him that on the way he died of heart failure! Technically, I suppose, this is murder, and his death was included in the charges brought against some of the prisoners.

There were 126 of them, and after long delays they were tried *en masse* by court martial. Most of them were found guilty. Four were sentenced to death, the remainder to

various terms of imprisonment. The death sentences aroused Germany to fury. German leaders made threatening speeches: irregular patriotic forces massed on the frontier, intent on a wild attempt at rescue. The moment was as acute as any since the War. England and France saved the situation by diplomatic action. They did not dispute the legality of the death sentences, but called attention to the Lithuanian neglect of the autonomy clauses of the settlement. With much good sense, the Lithuanian president exercised his prerogative of reprieve, and the problem was shelved—not solved.

Memel was again in the news in 1938. While the Poles massed at Vilna, prepared to march into Lithuania, German troops were ready to seize Memel. Only the Lithuanian submission to Poland averted what might easily have been the first stage of a European war.

According to German propaganda, the territory was burning to return to the Fatherland—even the Lithuanians of the rural districts wanted to go back. This, by my impressions, is not true. It was not even true that all the Germans wanted to return, for some of them appreciated the new prosperity and the potentialities of the future. Yet it would be absurd to claim that they were happy under Lithuanian rule. *It is a pity that the Lithuanian treatment of the Memel-landers was not more liberal; yet the difficulties were immense—propaganda ensured that the population was recalcitrant and non-co-operative. There could be no peace in Memel under such conditions: it was never the Nazi intention that there should be peace.*

After Munich, Hitler declared once again that he had no more territorial ambitions in Europe. Yet the event aroused a wild wave of Nazi enthusiasm in Memel, and all the old arguments began afresh. One of the German spokesmen proclaimed that, although the Fuehrer had disclaimed further conquests, he had not forbidden exiled Germans

to clamour for return to the Reich. This claim had a familiar ring, and was not very comforting.

The end of Memel came suddenly but not unexpectedly. On March 21st 1939, Germany presented an ultimatum to Lithuania which followed a now familiar pattern. Memel was to be surrendered within five days, and was to be a Free City. (This status was conveniently forgotten a few minutes later.) There was nothing to be said, for Lithuania had no effective allies—and it was made quite clear that any refusal would involve the immediate invasion and subjection of Lithuania. Within the five days, therefore, Klaipeda had become Memel again.

There were other points in the ultimatum, which suggested that Lithuania might become a vassal state to Germany on the Slovak model. These were resisted; and, as we have seen, Lithuania turned to Poland for support. Her position to-day is difficult but not impossible: her gains almost compensate her losses. Her spirit is sound, and the virile independence of the Lithuanians is invigorating. But Memel provides an excellent example of how European problems should not be solved. And nowhere outside Germany is the solution regarded as permanent.

## X

While we are in this part of the world, a glance at the southern Baltic states is advisable, for they must now be classed as within the danger zone of Europe. Indeed, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are already marked on Nazi maps as German!

This absurd claim is based on the presence in all three countries of the Balts, a scattered tribe of Germanic origin. They number no more than three per cent of the population, but before the War they were wealthy and influential. Above all, they were the great landowners of the Baltic

provinces of Russia. These "Baltic barons," better educated, more intelligent and more energetic than their Russian rulers, were not satisfied with the semi-feudal power they enjoyed on their own estates. They sought—and received—high places in the Tsar's Court and especially in his army. When the number of Baltic Germans holding high rank in the Russian army is considered, the wonder is not that Russia lost the war, but that she kept it going for three years. It is probable that the Russians lost as much by treachery as they did in open battle.

To-day these "Baltic barons" are a disgruntled class. (I hasten to add that there are hundreds of German merchants in the cities of the Baltic states who are prosperous and contented.) Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania all imposed some degree of expropriation of estates: the greater part of the lands of the Balts was taken over at a nominal figure by the State, for allocation to peasant farmers. The "barons" withdrew sulkily to their manor houses on the rump of their estates, or left the country for Germany—where they loudly proclaimed their wrongs, preaching a crusade for the recovery of German lands.

The situation of the three states was not easy. Their frontiers are open and indefensible, and their resources small. They were firm adherents of the League of Nations until its melancholy failure: then they withdrew into a strict neutrality. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania formed an entente, determined to pursue a common foreign policy. The only exception was at Lithuania's expense—the other two states declined to give more than their moral support in respect of their partner's quarrel with Poland over Vilna and with Germany over Memel.

This saving clause has now been eradicated by the regime of Memel and the recent Polish-Lithuanian *rapprochement*, and the three Baltic states can now pursue a united policy. In their early years after the War, the suspected enemy was

their old master, Russia: to-day all Baltic eyes are directed towards Germany—with good reason.

Recent moves have been rapid. The Baltic states are now on friendly terms with Russia—which country is most unlikely to view with favour any northern extension of the German seaboard. Indeed, Russia's reaction to any German advance to the north-east would be automatic, and would have nothing to do with interlogies. A glance at the map shows that a German fleet based on Tallinn would confine Russia to the Gulf of Finland. On the other hand, with the Russian fleet free to emerge, as at present, it would be more than a nuisance to Germany—who would be compelled to maintain the greater part of her fleet in the North Sea. If Russia could interrupt German supplies from the north Baltic countries, this would be a major stroke.

The three threatened states are part of her natural defences. All three have firmly stated their determination to fight to the last if their independence is threatened. Quite naturally, they are not anxious to attract German animosity by accepting Russian protection.

The atmosphere is clearer in the Baltic since Poland came down on the side of the western democracies. The actual terms of Britain's guarantee to Poland are important: we undertook to support Poland with all measures if as a result of aggressive action Poland considered her independence to be threatened. It was made quite clear that this guarantee did not apply only to Poland's frontiers. If a German seizure of Danzig were held by Poland to menace her freedom, and she chose to fight, then we should support her. It is certain that Poland would consider a German invasion of the Baltic states as a threat to her vital interests. So would Russia; there would be no argument over pacts at such a moment of action.

## CHAPTER III

### PROBLEMS OF THE BALKANS

#### I

YUGOSLAVIA is the land of the South Slavs. When it emerged from the War it was called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but this title was cumbersome. Yugoslavia was a sensible choice, though to British eyes and ears it was regrettably confused with Czechoslovakia.

It is a fascinating country. If any land in Europe can claim to be the meeting-place of East and West, that land is Yugoslavia. The term "land of contrasts" has been used so often that it is now a cliché, but it is readily applicable to Yugoslavia. Scenically the country is an amazing medley, and more than once I have wandered from frontier to frontier, delighted continuously with the changing scene. In the north are the Slovene Alps—a continuation of the Alpine group. This is a lovely land, reminiscent of the Tyrol at its best, and inhabited by a friendly and virile peasant people. Immediately to the south is a region of green hills, bordering the valleys of Danubian tributaries. This is the land of the Croats, pleasant rather than magnificent. Next follows a wilder country, known in olden days as Serbia and Bosnia. Sometimes the mountains are green and friendly, enclosing fertile valleys: sometimes they are gaunt, forbidding ridges, with intervals of desolate *karst*—a rocky desert. The *karst* is seen at its best—or at its worst!—in the old kingdom of Montenegro, to the south of Dalmatia. Here at least is one stretch of Yugoslavia which appears in the British map, for thousands of tourists frequent

Dalmatia every summer. Its innumerable islands, ancient towns, and bathing beaches make it an admirable holiday centre, but for interest it cannot compare with its hinterland. Who would loiter too long on a Dalmatian beach, when but a hundred miles away is Sarajevo, capital of Moslem Europe? In Turkey, the ancient protector of Islam, the picturesque side of Moslem religious life has vanished, but in Sarajevo the muezzin still calls the faithful to prayer from the minaret, and the women are heavily veiled.

Nor are the contrasts confined to scenery. In no land of its size is there such wide variety of peoples. Serbs and Croats are own cousins, but a casual stranger can distinguish them. Serbs and Bosnians are own brothers, yet the manner of their lives differs strangely. Here in Yugoslavia is a range of national costumes and customs which are a delight to the student and the lover of the picturesque. A south Serbian village on a Sunday morning is like a scene from a romantic highly-coloured play.

You would never guess from their jolly inconsequential demeanour that the Serbs rank high among the fighting races of Europe. Their history has been written in blood, and there are few people in the land who believe that the last page of the book has been completed.

The South Slavs came from Southern Russia in the sixth century, and settled across the Central Balkans. Two hundred years later came the more virile Bulgars. The South Slavs were disunited, lived in isolated tribes. For succeeding centuries the Serbs were under Bulgar or Greek rule, while Croats and Slovenes sought the protection of Venice or Hungary. In the twelfth century, however, a Serb kingdom was founded, and endured until the coming of the Turks. These Asiatic warriors overwhelmed the Balkans: in a fatal battle at Kossovo in 1389 the Serbs were overthrown, and passed under the Turkish yoke for nearly 500 years.



A dozen times the Serbs struck for their freedom, but not until the last century was it achieved. In successive wars more provinces were freed from the Turks, always at a price in blood. By 1913 practically the whole of the purely Serbian territory had been recovered, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been annexed by Austria-Hungary. The kindred provinces of Croatia, Slovenia, and Dalmatia had been incorporated in Austria-Hungary since medieval days.

The Serbs of 1913 burned for a re-union with their cousins, but conflict with a powerful Austria-Hungary was a vastly different proposition from one with a decadent Turkey. Maybe the term "re-union" is too decisive, too, since previous unity between the branches of the Yugoslav race had been of the slightest, and had been broken for 600 years. Yet, as we have said, while Croats and Slovenes were cousins of the Serbs, Bosnians were the Serbs' brothers—and the people of Bosnia were Serbs, under a foreign ruler. It was not President Wilson who invented the political theory that peoples should live under the rule of their own kin—it has been a natural urge since civilization began its modern advance. The World War was the direct outcome of the determination of the Bosnian Serbs to join their brothers.

To-day the South Slavs are re-united. Their country will never be rich, but there is no reason why it should not be happy. Before the Yugoslavs can sit back and survey the future with confidence, nevertheless, there remain many problems to be solved, many of them generated in blood. Macedonia has been a danger spot of Europe for thirty years. The Albanian districts of Yugoslavia may be a danger spot within the next thirty years. There are over half a million Yugoslavs within the Italian frontiers, miserably unhappy, and longing for freedom almost as fervently as did the Bosnians in 1914. Hungary demands a

revision of the northern frontier, and Italy has claims to the northern part of Dalmatia. And, as if these were not enough, Yugoslavia is torn with internal dissension. It used to be an axiom that all European wars germinate in the Balkans. If this is still true, then Yugoslavia's history of blood is indeed incomplete, for a considerable proportion of the Balkan Danger Spots lie within her frontiers.

## II

If my father or my grandfather could have picked up this book and read a section heading, "The Macedonian Problem," they would have felt quite at home. Nor would its contents have added much to their enlightenment, for the story of Macedonia since their day is little more than repetition of an over-familiar theme.

It is not a particularly attractive country, and I have often wondered why its possession should have occasioned such continuous bloodshed. In the west are mountains, bleak and barren, with wide valleys—green in spring, but parched in autumn. To the east the mountains fall away till they merge in rolling uplands and monotonous plains. In short, it is typical Balkan country, and in Western Europe would be permanently classed as a distressed area. To add to its distractions, it lies both on the earthquake and malaria belts of Southern Europe.

In ancient days Macedonia was, of course, the centre of a mighty empire, but its power depended more on the personality of its emperors than upon the character of the country. At the time of Christ it was an unimportant Roman province. Then followed the successive swarms of invaders common to most Balkan countries. The Bulgars were the only ones to hold the district for sufficient length of time to impress their character upon it, and in 1371 it fell to the Turks.

A hundred years ago, when the Christian races of the

Balkans began to throw off the Turkish yoke, the problem of Macedonia was already appreciated in Western Europe. It boused one of the most complicated ethnic medleys in Europe—the word *macedoine*, a culinary mixture, was coined from Macedonia. Greeks, the traders of South-Eastern Europe, were to be found in large numbers in all towns—in Salonika they had to contend with a lively colony of Jews, who were descended from refugees from the Spanish Inquisition. The great landlords and richer peasants were mostly Turks, as were the officials—except the tax-collectors: these dangerous positions were sub-let to Greeks or Armenians. In the west were considerable districts occupied by Albanians, and in the north by Serbs. There were thousands of families of *vlachs*—landless men, shepherds, who moved with their flocks from lower to higher pasturages according to the seasons: they were mostly of Roumanian origin. But in addition to these assorted nationalities—and a dozen less significant minorities—there was a much larger indigenous population which called itself Macedonian. The people classed themselves as a Bulgarian tribe, and looked to the Bulgars for aid in the struggle for liberty. Indeed, it is significant that at this time Serbia took little interest in Macedonia.

By the beginning of the present century, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania had achieved their freedom in part, and the attenuated Turkish Empire consisted in the main of the district about Constantinople, Albania, and Macedonia. Conditions of life in Macedonia were pitiful under Turkish misrule, with murder and starvation as its salient feature. By this time the freed Bulgars were working hard for their brothers—or cousins—in Macedonia. Hundreds of schools were established: and eventually terrorism replied to terror. In 1893 two Bulgar schoolmasters founded the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—the famous I.M.R.O. These men, Damian Gruev and Pere

Todlev, were ardent patriots, and were esteemed as such by the liberal states of the west. Their war-cry was "Liberty or Death for Macedonia"—and in view of the subsequent argument, it is necessary to emphasize the words "for Macedonia"—there was no mention of Bulgaria, Serbia, or Greece. They fought an underground war against the Turkish tyranny, returning blow for blow. Yet their movement had a moral basis, the cause of liberty. It flourished exceedingly: patriotism was its religion—recruits had to swear eternal loyalty on a revolver and a dagger in the form of a cross. The Turks were well served by their spies: they tortured, raped, and massacred. The patriots formed komitadji or irregular bands and took to the mountains, and a guerrilla warfare of intense ferocity began.

Now when, in 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece formed a coalition to drive the Turks out of Europe—or at least to liberate the surviving populations of their own races—very wisely they divided the prospective spoils before they began. But over Macedonia they could not agree—all three had serious claims. The Greeks were emphatic that Salonika was Greek—which was largely true—and claimed that the Macedonian hinterland should go with its port. The Serbs pointed out that Macedonia had been an integral part of the great Serbian Empire: that the people were a Slav tribe akin to the Serbs; and that access to the Aegean Sea was vital to the new nation—Greece already had a hundred harbours, while Serbia had none. Bulgaria claimed that Macedonia had formed an integral part of *two* Bulgar Empires: that the Macedonians were a Bulgar tribe, much nearer ethnically to the Bulgars than the Serbs: that they spoke a Bulgarian dialect, and that culturally they leaned to Bulgaria. Further, Bulgaria had done the greater part of the work of making the Macedonians freedom-conscious.

So, although other potential conquests were apportioned,

the major part of Macedonia was left unallocated until victory was achieved—the line of “autonomy” was to be followed, and this in Macedonia meant nothing. The success of the campaign was unexpectedly rapid. By virtue of their geographical position, the hardest fighting fell to the Bulgars, who were never wanting in courage. While they were pressing towards Constantinople, Greece and Serbia occupied Macedonia—and, when Turkey was beaten, it was obvious that they did not intend to budge.

Then Bulgaria made an appalling error of judgment, turning suddenly on her former allies. After initial victories, she was speedily beaten—Roumania joining in with a flank attack. The victorious allies parcelled out Macedonia between themselves. Salonika and the south went to Greece the north-west to Serbia, and Bulgaria was allotted only a minute area of Macedonia. Licking her wounds, the scowling Bulgaria sat back with dark thoughts of revenge.

Now there is a serious school of thought in this country which argues that European squabbles have nothing to do with us. Its exponents would laugh at me if I suggested that the Macedonian problem was a matter of vital importance to Britain. Yet, if I wished for a thesis for this book, I would undertake to prove that every one of these European danger spots is a matter of real concern to us. Apart from the fact that Balkan quarrels have a nasty habit of spreading, Macedonia has already cost the lives of half a million British soldiers, and the maiming of a million more.

This is not conjecture, but solid fact. Consider the situation at Christmas 1914. We were at war with Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Of these, easily the weakest was Turkey. Further, the defeat of Turkey would have had most important strategic consequences, since the Dardanelles would be opened to admit supplies to hard-pressed and ill-equipped Russia.

In such circumstances we looked about for allies in the Balkans. The natural enemy of the Balkan States was Turkey: the natural protector of the little Slav nations of Serbia and Bulgaria was Russia. The Bulgars had already shown what they could do against the Turks: a Bulgarian onslaught towards Constantinople, and a British demonstration at the Dardanelles, and Turkey was doomed. The subsequent potentialities are obvious—not merely the reinforcement of Russia, but a favourable opportunity of attacking Austria-Hungary in the rear. No military knowledge is necessary to appreciate this—a glance at the map is enough.

We approached Bulgaria: our task should have been easy, for popular opinion was overwhelmingly with Russia and against Turkey. Bulgaria's demands were simple—she wanted Macedonia. We put the point to Serbia: "Give up your share of Macedonia, so as to bring in Bulgaria. It is a tract of no outstanding importance, since there is now no question of your having Salonika. But, if we win this war, you are to have Croatia and Slovenia—territory incomparably richer—to say nothing of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And in place of Salonika, you shall have ample ports in the Adriatic. All this can come about *only* if we win the War. So give up Macedonia to Bulgaria, and make victory certain."

But Serbia said no. Until this time she had repelled Austrian invasions with comparative ease—considered that victory *was* certain without Bulgaria's aid. She refused to yield a yard of the disputed territory.

Naturally, German and Austrian diplomats were not idle—and their bargaining hand was far stronger than ours. They were at war with Serbia—could give away her territory with equanimity. They argued with Bulgaria: "Come in on our side: we are bound to win, and then you shall have your Macedonia." And, since we offered nothing

and the Central Powers offered exactly what the Bulgars wanted, small wonder at the eventual decision.

Bulgaria came in on the side of Germany and Austria. The tottering Turkey was propped up by the supplies which could now pass to her: Serbia, smitten by the Bulgars in flank, was rapidly overrun by invaders. An immobile army had to be assembled at Salonika—sarcastically termed by the Germans their “greatest internment camp”—



watched by Bulgarian jailers. Is it too much to claim that the Bulgarian decision lengthened the War by a year? Most competent military critics would say *two* years, with their toll of frightful slaughter. And all because of miserable Macedonia.

Yet once again Bulgaria had backed the wrong side, and at the end of the War her case was worse than before, with further fragments of Macedonia nibbled from her territory. In vain she put her ethnic and historic arguments to the statesmen of the peace conferences. In these days it does not pay to make war and win—it is disastrous to make war

and lose. Bulgaria had gambled recklessly, and had lost. But the problem of Macedonia still remained.

There was nothing to do but accept the situation, and the Government did it. Not so I.M.R.O., which was not bound by the judgments of Paris. In the rump of Bulgarian Macedonia bands of desperate men gathered: they called themselves patriots, but others called them brigands. They kept up a state of intermittent warfare, and claimed to "rule" their own corner of Bulgaria in the name of the Macedonian people.

At first they were treated as an irritating nuisance, an extremist cult whose atrocities would soon lose their novelty. But in 1922 the komitadji bands received reinforcements.

Now hitherto the Greek section of Macedonia had seen surprisingly little trouble. But, it will be recalled, the Greeks had been allocated a huge expanse of territory in Asia Minor by the Powers at Paris: the agreement was that Smyrna was essentially a Greek port, and must have an adequate hinterland. The new dictator of Turkey held vastly different views: his armies swept the Greeks from Asia Minor: then, so that it might never again be claimed that Smyrna was a Greek port, he cleared all Greeks out of Turkish territory. The Greeks, of course, retaliated by clearing all Turks out of Greece. The exchange, however, was very unequal—200,000 Turks against 1,500,000 Greeks. That meant that homes had to be found for a surplus of 1,300,000 Greeks—a colossal task.

After a period of chaos, the Greeks tackled it boldly. Greek Macedonia was an obvious area of settlement: the towns were largely Greek, but the villages were not. There were tens of thousands of semi-nomadic *vlaachs*, of Roumanian origin—they were promptly transported to Roumania. There were even larger numbers of Macedonians who claimed to be Bulgars: they were taken at



their word, and bundled into Bulgaria. Naturally, they were disgruntled at this sudden uprooting from their ancestral homes—and the young men gravitated automatically to the komitadji.

It might be said, therefore, that the problem of Greek-Macedonia was solved—amicably, from the official point of view, for treaties for exchange of population had been arranged between Greece and Bulgaria, under the ægis of the League of Nations. As a result of the exchange and re-settlement, ninety per cent of the population of Greek Macedonia became Greek, which is a remarkable percentage for this part of the world. Except for the resentment on the part of the emigrants, therefore, the Macedonian quarrel was now almost exclusively between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

I.M.R.O. dominated the scene. It even levied its own taxes—in addition to the government dues—in its own district. Its headquarters at Petritsch were a mixture of civil government and field force. The cabinet at Sofia professed itself helpless—was actually overawed by the terrorists. One minister, Tsankoff, replaced the weather-cock on his house by a machine-gun! Any minister who opposed I.M.R.O. was speedily assassinated.

The policy of Yugoslavia did not help. It was the intention to Serbize the population of Yugoslav Macedonia. Bulgar schools were forbidden, and every form of Bulgar or Macedonian patriotism was ruthlessly suppressed. When first I travelled in this district, it was a crime to be found in the possession of a Bulgarian newspaper!

The murder of the Macedonian peasant leader, Stambouliski, in 1923, brought the conflict into the open. He had attempted to settle the quarrel with Yugoslavia—and I.M.R.O. condemned him. First he was made to dig his own grave: then his ears and nose were cut off, before he was mercifully killed. This was the beginning of a series



TURKS OF THE ROUMANIAN DOBRUDJA  
(Above)



MACEDONIA—  
ideal country for komitadji warfare  
(Below)



PRIZREN, ANCIENT CAPITAL OF SERBIA

*(Above)*

ALBANIAN TRIBESMEN

*(Below)*

of atrocities which were to cause the deaths of thousands of people, many of them without active part in the quarrel.

I felt desperately sorry for the wretched inhabitants of Yugoslav Macedonia, or South Serbia, as it had been rechristened. Komitadji bands would swoop over the frontier in some desperate raid of pillage and murder: if the peasants aided the raiders—and their natural sympathies were often with them—then they could look for trouble when the avenging Yugoslav soldiery arrived. If they refused their aid, then the komitadji were past masters in the arts of torture and murder.

From what I could see, there was little to choose between the two sides. In one village I saw a man who had "talked;" the opposite side had made sure that he would not talk again, for his tongue was slit down the middle. In the same street was a woman who had refused to talk: she bared her shoulder to show me her armpit, where a red-hot brand had been thrust. Another man showed me his fingers, where wedges of wood had been driven between the flesh and the nails.

Every atrocity provoked a dozen others, for reprisal is the commonest of instinctive passions. Except that it was far more ferocious, the guerrilla warfare in Macedonia was akin to that in Ireland at the time of the Black and Tans. When I talked to komitadji, they protested strongly that they were not murderers—they were patriots: their object, they claimed, was to attract the attention of the chancelleries of Europe to Macedonia. If so, they certainly succeeded! You must not blame them too hardly for their choice of method. Far too often have civilized governments ignored problems peacefully presented, only to capitulate to armed disorder.

The two governments were inevitably involved. The Yugoslavs complained that the Bulgarian Government connived at the komitadji raids—that it made no effort to

suppress the bands. The Bulgars retorted that if the Yugoslav Government had allowed to its minorities the rights to which they were entitled, then the trouble would never have arisen. There was an acute state of tension, akin to the moments preceding war. The Yugoslav frontier was a mass of barbed wire, with machine-gun posts every kilometre.

For ten years the appalling record of slaughter continued. I.M.R.O. was well supplied with money and arms—apart from the "taxes" it levied, it boasted that it received subsidies from Italy, the "historic" enemy of Yugoslavia. But in 1933, there arose a Bulgarian Government which was appalled at this warfare between cousins: the influence of King Boris was flung into the scale, in the cause of peace.

The komitadjis eased the situation by quarrelling among themselves—and they were no more gentle in their internecine feuds than in their guerrilla warfare. Taking advantage of the situation, the Government exiled the leaders. A new atmosphere developed. King Alexander of Yugoslavia paid a state visit to Sofia which had far-reaching effects in the cause of friendship. Yet a few weeks later King Alexander was dead.

I would revert here to my previous contention—that the Balkan quarrels *do* concern us very intimately. Mr. Eden in his short career did a good deal of first-class work—and no one doubts that he will do a good deal more. If I were able to put to him a poser: Which was the most delicate moment for European peace during your career? he might prefer to make more than one answer. I am confident, nevertheless, that one of the moments he would choose would be that which followed the murder of Alexander—when Yugoslavia and Hungary were straining at each other's throats, and when war was nearer than we knew. The lowering of the tension must be counted among

Mr. Eden's major feats of diplomacy. And the man who caused the trouble was named Chernozenski. He was "borrowed" by a Croat terrorist organization to murder Alexander, but actually he was a Macedonian komitadji.

(The tension between Yugoslavia and Hungary was due to the fact that many Croat terrorists had found refuge in Hungary. But the man who plotted Alexander's murder, Pavelitch, made his headquarters in Italy—and was never given up to justice. He is now reported to be in Vienna, actively intervening in Yugoslavia's Croat problem.)

To-day there is comparative peace in Macedonia, for the power of the komitadjis is broken. There are people who believe that the problem is solved—I wish I could. Macedonian children in South Serbia are taught entirely in Serb; it is considered that within one or two generations they will have forgotten that they ever spoke a Bulgarian dialect. But I found no signs that they would forget that they were Macedonians. People in the Balkans are noted for their long memories.

I recall one scene: two peasants, sleeping on a hillside. Yet, as I approached them, I saw that they were not sleeping, but dead: murdered. Close by their families were mourning. Those peasants were nothing to me, but I have never forgotten the overwhelming grief of their children. I do not think a little elementary schooling in Serbian is likely to make the children forget. As they grow older, they are bound to ask why their fathers died.

But, if I do not believe that the Macedonian problem is solved, I am quite convinced that it is soluble. Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, cousin nations, are now living on terms of comparative friendship: the atmosphere eases every year. There is a historic as well as an ethnic bond between the two peoples and the territory they occupy.

I recall one incident which made me scratch my head in despair at the complexity of the problem. I have referred

to the rival claims of Serbs and Bulgars to the Macedonian kinship—but in a village near Skoplje I met two men who were brothers: *one called himself a Bulgar, the other a Serb.*

Yet this family provided my brightest outlook on the Macedonian problem.

"Are you a Serb or a Bulgar?" I asked the son of one of these brothers.

"Neither," he answered. "I am a Yugoslav!"

A magnificent answer! He was neither Serb nor Bulgar, but a Southern Slav.

"And you?" I asked of his sister.

"I am a Yugoslav too," she said, "*if you include Bulgaria as well.*"

It is possible that the day may come within our lifetime when Yugoslavia and Bulgaria enter into some bond of federation, however loose. That would be a glad day for Europe. Macedonia—breeding-ground of Balkan wars and their consequences for fifty years—would then pass from the category of dormant volcanoes to the extinct.

### III

It is, or should be, an admitted principle that everything which happens in a country is liable to affect other countries. There are politicians who proclaim that a country's internal affairs are its own concern; but, if they believe this, they deceive themselves. If France places a heavy import duty on coal, its potentialities are obvious—thousands of British miners may be thrown out of work at once. If France levies a heavy duty on coco-nuts the potentialities are not so obvious, but they are there—in some measure the lives of British subjects are vitally affected by the changes made. As a trading nation, every economic event in the world has its repercussions in our own country.

Similarly, internal strife is not the purely personal con-

cern of the country involved. We might like it to be, but it isn't. The case of Spain is a startling example. Here was a country remote from European politics. It may not be true that Africa begins at the Pyrenees, but it is true that European jealousies used to end at the Pyrenees. Spain played no part in the combines, intrigues and alliances which disturbed Europe. She had no designs on anybody else's territory, and no other Power had designs on hers. Any country in the world would have signed a non-aggression pact with Spain, and kept it. If ever there was a country in Europe whose internal affairs were purely domestic, that country was Spain.

Yet we have already seen the fallacy. A civil war in Spain, an affair for Spaniards only, became a battle of creeds, with a dozen nationalities participating. No one would argue that we are not interested in the internal affairs of Spain to-day; indeed, the closest study of Spain is essential, for only astute statesmanship prevented this "domestic" quarrel from developing into a general conflagration; nor does the danger of Spanish complications pass with the termination of war. Was it not equally essential, then, to study Spain, in 1936, when the present trouble was brewing? Or in 1931, and 1923?

This argument is my justification for including Croatia and Slovenia among the Danger Spots of Europe. At first sight they are purely a domestic problem of Yugoslavia—exactly as at first sight the military rising of General Franco against the Republican Government was purely a domestic problem of Spain. It ought to have been, maybe, but it wasn't. The problem of Croatia and Slovenia is domestic only in that no other country has any right to intervene: its effects are considerably wider, and may prove to be of world importance.

I have sketched very briefly the emergence of Yugoslavia from the welter of the World War. We saw that the



new country was more than an enlarged Serbia. The addition of Bosnia and Herzegovina absorbed another million Serbs, but Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slovenia, all incorporated in Yugoslavia, were inhabited by people of common origin but of different outlook from the Serbs. The Croats of Dalmatia and Croatia speak the same tongue, Serbo-Croat, but Slovene is another dialect of the basic Slav language.

Years before the War, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had dreamed of re-union—for they had never forgotten that they were all South Slavs, closer in kinship than men of Northumbria and Wessex. Patriotic societies revived the glories of South Slav history and culture: they were periodically suppressed by the Austrians, but always appeared again in a new form.

Now one of the few personal opinions I have advanced in this book is that a policy is preferable to a nebulous idea. History produces ample proofs, but enthusiasts tend to ignore the cold lessons of history in favour of its romances. Before the War most Serbs, Croats and Slovenes dreamed of a united South Slav kingdom, but no one had the foresight to plan out the form of the new unity. As in the case of Macedonia, there would be ample time to settle details like this when victory had been achieved. This was a vital error. It may be wrong to count your chickens before they are hatched, but it is only prudent to decide what you are going to do with your chickens *if* they are hatched.

The last days of 1918 were so full of emotional excitement that few people worried about forms of government. The Croats and Slovenes, to say nothing of the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had achieved their freedom—the South Slav tribe was united again after 800 years. Now everybody was going to live happily ever after.

But a honeymoon cannot be indefinitely prolonged:

sooner or later the happy couple have to decide how they are going to live—most couples wisely prefer to do this before their marriage. Very soon the sentimental phrases of rejoicing merged into economic argument. If anything is calculated to upset the blissful atmosphere of a honeymoon, it is economic argument.

The new country needed money, desperately. For three years Serbia had been ravaged by enemies: its portable wealth had disappeared; its fields lay barren, and only a few miserable cattle roamed its parched hills. Croatia and Slovenia, however, were unscathed and comparatively prosperous—their soil had escaped the deadly touch of war. In the new taxes, therefore, the comparatively well-off Croats naturally found themselves paying more than the bankrupt Serbs. Such a realization has killed many a promising friendship.

Nor was ethnic kinship enough. It was quite true that the Croats spoke the same language as the Serbs, but for 800 years the two branches of the tribe had lived under vastly different conditions—under different civilizations. Nationality *can* be submerged by long existence in an alien land: the descendants of the Huguenots and the Flemish weavers are as English as I am. The marvel is, indeed, not that there were differences between Serb and Croat outlook, but that after so many centuries they retained so much in common.

Croats and Slovenes lived under Austrian and Hungarian rule, generally beneficent and comparatively just: Serbs lived under Turkish despots, inefficient, corrupt, and sometimes brutal. Croats and Slovenes were Christianized from Rome, Serbs from Constantinople. Thus to-day Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholics, Serbs Orthodox. And although a Croat can understand every word a Serb says, he cannot understand a word he writes, for Croats use the Latin alphabet and Serbs the Cyrillic.

Croats and Slovenes enjoyed the moderate educational facilities of Austria-Hungary: the Serbs had to make their own. Croats and Slovenes were peasants of peace—although the Austrians esteemed them as soldiers when the occasion arose. The Serbs were bred on war—their life under the Turks was one long desultory guerrilla campaign, and the last hundred years a ceaseless battle for liberty. Croats and Slovenes made accommodations with their civilized masters, and some of them attained the highest military, political, and cultural rank: the Serbs were almost serfs, hating their Turkish masters. The culture of Western Europe permeated Croatia and Slovenia, but could not cross the Turkish frontier. The Croat is polite and refined, a companion for conversation: the Serb is vigorous and tough, a companion for battle.

Is it marvellous, then, that after 800 years the outlook of the South Slav brothers differed vastly? If a Huguenot descendant did return to France, would he not have difficulty in adjusting himself to French conditions? And the differences between the civilizations of England and France are minor compared with the vast gulf between those of Austria-Hungary and Turkey. The first title of the new country was "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes." It was an unhappy choice.

The Croats then made the surprising discovery that they were outnumbered—there were 6,000,000 Serbs, and only 3,000,000 Croats and Slovenes. Thus the Serbs could always outvote the Croats and Slovenes. One would have imagined that this might have been foreseen! Further, by a weird electoral law typical of the Balkans, a party which polled one-half of the total votes received seventy-five per cent of the seats. But was it essential to form parties along racial lines—why not the Conservative-Liberal-Labour alignment?

With amazing rapidity the quarrel came to a head. As

so often happens, it was complicated by its personalities. The prime minister, Pashitch, was a grand old warrior with a vast experience of Balkan combat, a man accustomed to bitter enemies and treacherous allies. He had fought throughout his life for the freedom of Serbia—he was too old to think of Yugoslavia. His opponents claimed that he regarded Croatia and Slovenia merely as conquered Austrian provinces, and some of his actions supported this view.

The Croatian leader was just as implacably dynamic. Stephen Raditch was an educated man of peasant stock, and became one of the outstanding orators of our generation. True, he had a ready-made case for presentation, for the new country was seething with complaints. Actually the whole of Europe was seething with complaints—you cannot turn the world upside down for four years and then expect it to be normal immediately afterwards. But Raditch did not emphasize this legitimate argument—he preferred to blame Belgrade. True, there was plenty to say: world conditions in 1920 were hopelessly chaotic, but nothing happened in Yugoslavia to ease their effect. The Serbs have always been noted as soldiers, but never as administrators.

I never heard Raditch speak, but many friends of mine did. "He was an orator," said one of them, a Croat, "yet he said nothing. I have heard him speaking to mass meetings—thousands of peasants on a mountainside. He would speak for hours at a stretch—a mass of words, clichés, parables, wit, contradictions and sheer nonsense. Often, in a long speech, he would say nothing that meant anything. Yet his audience would be frenzied in its enthusiasm. He was a demagogue: the peasants of Croatia almost worshipped him. They knew nothing of world conditions—they only knew that they were heavily taxed, that their produce commanded poor prices, that cultural

effort was at a standstill. Raditch blamed Belgrade for everything—and they believed him."

Raditch travelled abroad, preaching the justice of the Croat-Slovene cause, and grossly exaggerating its potentialities for danger. Considerable foreign opinion was attracted to his side—he was a good linguist, and could be persuasive in several languages. And, even his enemies believed, he was sincere.

Then someone in Belgrade made a great tactical mistake—Raditch was flung into prison. He emerged with the redoubled glory of the hero who had suffered for his cause.

Was he sincere? After denouncing Pashitch as a tyrant and the king as a murderer, Raditch joined the Government at Belgrade! True he did not stay in it very long. Even this flirtation with authority did not destroy his popularity. By this time he had worked out a more practical programme—he demanded a federal union of the historic provinces of Yugoslavia. The scheme appeared at first sight to be reasonable enough, and his following increased.

Then, on June 20th, 1928, came the tragedy which was to make a domestic argument become a serious quarrel. Balkan politics have always been virile, and more than one parliamentary chamber has seen a pitched battle across the floor of the house. A Montenegrin deputy on the Government side emptied his revolver into the Croatian benches. Two members were killed outright, and Raditch was mortally wounded. His death was as dramatic as his life, with every peasant in Croatia and Slovenia sharing the pains of his dying hours. Death brought him a martyr's crown—and gave a religious significance to his cause: a martyr *must* be right.

Parliamentary government was suspended, and King Alexander became *virtual dictator* of Yugoslavia. True, Yugoslavia had not reacted strongly to democratic methods—the king had had twenty-five ministries in seven years.

But his action had one untoward result: when a people has grievances, a scapegoat must be found. Hitherto the Belgrade Government had shared this onerous position: now Alexander filled it alone.

The Croats and the Slovenes were not the only ones to



HISTORIC PROVINCES OF YUGOSLAVIA

grumble—indeed, in those days there was plenty of cause to grumble in Yugoslavia. Nor were some of the accusations flung against Alexander without foundation—yet the principal Croat-Slovene complaint was in the main unfair.

The Croats and Slovenes were now firmly demanding a federal union—that is to say, the continuance of the state

of Yugoslavia with full financial, defence, and diplomatic powers, but with a large measure of autonomy allotted to its constituent provinces—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Montenegro, Vojvodina,<sup>1</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croats pointed out that even under Austria-Hungary they had enjoyed a considerable measure of home rule. At the Croat capital, Zagreb, were local ministries of Justice, Education, Agriculture, and Police; and a local parliament—all subject, of course, to that at Vienna. It was urged that a similar scheme was easily workable in Yugoslavia: the Croats claimed that this was their underlying idea when they agreed to re-union in the last days of 1918. They were bitterly disappointed with conditions in Yugoslavia. The accidents of history had treated Croats and Slovenes in friendlier fashion than Serbs. Croats and Slovenes were far more advanced in culture, education, and agricultural methods, they declared, but they were rapidly being reduced to the level of the backward Serbs. "Who could deny that the cultural standards of Croatia and Slovenia were the highest in Yugoslavia? Who could be happy when even our ancient folk-songs are banned by the police? And this because the police are all Serbs! Here is the Croat race, self-governed for generations, now ruled entirely by Belgrade, with scarcely any of its people among the civil service or the police. We are ruled by force; we have no say in affairs. The only men who count in a Croat village are the Serbian police. Croatia is absolutely united in its opposition to Belgrade rule—in the last election ever held, sixty-three of the sixty-seven seats went to the Croat peasant party. Is it right that millions of people should be ruled against their will—and that by an inferior race?" So runs the Croat complaint.

There can be no doubt as to its universality. Pictures of the martyred Raditch are as common in Croatia as those

<sup>1</sup> Comprising the Backa and the Yugoslav share of the Banat.

of Hitler in Germany. And, in spite of the ban, they are often surrounded by the Croat colours. Many similar problems in Europe are very debatable, but one thing is reasonably certain—that if a plebiscite were to be held in Croatia and Slovenia, there would be an overwhelming majority in favour of federalization.

Alexander's opposition to the scheme was inexorable. He believed that Yugoslavia could only exist as a united country: that any loosening of the central authority would be an open invitation to intervention by interested neighbouring states—and in this he was probably right. The idea of unity dominated his thoughts and actions. But it was quite a mistake to interpret his dreams as directed against Croatia and Slovenia: rather, their aim was for the unity of Yugoslavia. The Croats complained bitterly when he destroyed the historic entity of Croatia by dividing it up into a series of provinces—but he did precisely the same to Serbia. It was made a crime to fly the ancient Croat national flag—or the Serbian flag. Alexander's approaches to the problem may not have been tactful, but at least his aim was sincere—he was not trying to make Croats into Serbs, but to make both into Yugoslavs.

On my first visit to Yugoslavia I was more than impressed by the gravity of the problem. In Croatia people talked quite openly about the inevitable assassination of King Alexander—he had already survived two attempts. There were stories of illicit arming, and certainly there was endless intrigue. The atmosphere was surprisingly akin to that in Ireland in 1914. *The tension was such that more than* one serious student wondered if the world would once again be plunged into war because of the problem of the South Slavs. The placation of Croatia and Slovenia was purely a domestic affair for Yugoslavia, but civil war would have meant endless complications. If it has been



impossible to prevent intervention in a detached country like Spain, imagine the possibilities in Yugoslavia, surrounded by jealous enemies!

The first relief to the tension came, by the irony of history, with the murder of King Alexander. The horror of the crime aroused widespread revulsion. Although Croats had talked so freely about the probability of such an assassination, the Croat terrorists who were largely responsible for its execution were violently denounced; many of the more extreme "patriotic" societies suddenly found their influence gone. Unlike the Serbs, trained in the hard school of merciless struggle with the Turks, the Croats were unfamiliar with the weapon of political murder. In death, many of the faults of Alexander were forgotten: it was agreed that his real mistake had been to hurry history, instead of allowing the Yugoslav medley to settle gently. His magnificent war record was recalled, and lost nothing in the re-telling.

Croats and Slovenes are less restrained and far more emotional than the Serbs. Their hearts bled for the widowed queen and the new boy king—at least these had done no wrong. There was a remarkable scene as Alexander's body was halted at Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. There was to be a scheduled halt of half an hour, to allow officials to pay their last respects. But this had to be extended to twenty-four hours, as hundreds of thousands of peasants swarmed into the city to do homage to their dead king.

For a moment it seemed that grief would re-unite the South Slav races. Dr. Matchek, the Croat leader, saw Queen Marie, and promised a truce. The moment was ripe for conciliation, but no one seized it. Emotion plays a deceptive part in politics, and pacts founded on sentiment seldom endure. Soon the old situation was restored—the demand for federation, with even wider powers for the constituent provinces. It should be explained, however,

that at no time was there any demand whatsoever for return to Hungarian rule.

A second relief was more effective—the Abyssinian war. It was revealed to Yugoslavia as to the world that Mussolini's threats were no empty phrases. His references to Dalmatia were recalled with apprehension: nor was the plight of the Croats and Slovenes in Italy forgotten.

The succeeding sections, outlining the co-related problems of Dalmatia, Fiume, and the Julian March, will reveal ample justification for askant looks at Italy.

Nevertheless, in 1935 Italian policy towards Yugoslavia suddenly changed. The threatening speeches of yesterday were forgotten, and fair words substituted. Important trade treaties were signed. The Yugoslav government quite naturally was glad to accept assurances of amity from its peaceful neighbour: the common people were not so sure. They had been brought up on distrust of Italy and affection for France, and public opinion cannot change as quickly as the policies of dictators. The government did its best, by Balkan standards. France was the ally of Yugoslavia, had trained and financed her army. But when the French Foreign Minister visited Belgrade, peasants who dared to shout "*Vive la France!*" were beaten up by the police.

Italy's reasons for her change of front were soon apparent—to secure the widest influence in Yugoslavia before Germany got there first. The rivalry between the Axis forces came to a head after the seizure of Austria—when, for the first time, Germany and Yugoslavia had a common frontier. German economic activity in Yugoslavia; already considerable, was heightened. The government at Belgrade appeared to favour German pretensions—while proclaiming firm friendship with Italy. The many machinations, some open, but most behind the scenes, brought the problem of Croatia and Slovenia out of the parochial into the European

class. After the fall of Czechoslovakia it became desperately urgent.

The parallel was only too obvious. The Slovaks, to gain autonomy, had "invited" the intervention of Germany. Might not the Croats be used in similar fashion? Their complaints against the Serbs were deeper and more forceful than any Slovak complaints against the Czechs. Here was a unique opportunity for Machiavellian politics.

For many weeks there was great anxiety in Europe. It was known that axis agents were probing Croat organizations. It appears that they made little headway. No sane Croat was anxious to see his country as a "protectorate," whether the "protector" should be Germany or Italy. Italian support had at most times been available for the Croats—at first, as a stab at Belgrade; later, in greater moderation, to settle the question before Germany could intervene.

The parallel of Slovakia could be read by a schoolboy. The pro-German government at Belgrade had fallen—actually because of its chauvinist attitude to the Croat question—and the new prime minister, M. Tsvetkovitch, was a realist who saw only too clearly the dangers of the new situation. At best Yugoslavia's position was not easy. She had abandoned the French Alliance, the Little Entente was dead: there remained only the Balkan Pact—but Yugoslavia might be overrun by Germany and Italy long before its action was effective. This was quite certain if at the moment of crisis Yugoslavia herself were torn by internal dissension—maybe by civil war. If the Serb-Croat feud grew worse, it would invite foreign intervention. Obviously the quarrel must be composed. M. Tsvetkovitch entered into negotiations with Dr. Matchek, the Croat leader.

Rapid progress was made. The government's attitude was vastly different from that of previous conferences.

At an early date it was announced that the principle of Croat control of Croatian affairs had been conceded, with a central Serb-Croat government for financial, defence, and foreign questions. The discussions continued as the area to be subject to Croat control.

On April 27th 1939, an announcement of agreement was made. To the consternation of most people, it was followed a few days later, by a Croat declaration that Prince Paul, the Senior Regent of Yugoslavia, had declined to confirm the agreement. There was a surge of feeling in Croatia, and for a moment it appeared that ugly events were pending. Again restraint was imposed by external influences. Germany appeared to be playing a double policy—wooing Croatia, on the Slovak model, but alternatively preparing a new Sudetenland. For there are already 400,000 Germans in northern Yugoslavia, and their instructions from their organizations were far-reaching. They were to buy land wherever they could in the Danube, Save and Drave valleys. The Croats were described as semi-barbarians; mixed marriages were discouraged—and the sale of strong drink to the Croats recommended. There is a strange repetition in propaganda methods.

The problem of the Croats is not yet solved, but there are still high hopes that it will be. It would appear that the agreement of April 27th comprised no more than notes of the discussions; wide powers had been allotted to the Croats, but there were still differences as to the area involved. It appears that the Zagreb parliament was to control Croatia, Slovenia, and Dalmatia. Bosnia has a mixed population; indeed, it is a miniature edition of more important problems, for the Serbs are in a majority to the west, Croats in the east—each away from the bulk of their fellows. It seems that local plebiscites afford the only solution.

It would appear, therefore, that the agreement announced

was by no means complete—which in itself explains the action of Prince Paul. Astute statesmanship is still necessary. The Serbs consider the Croat claims to Bosnia hopelessly exaggerated: the important military faction is unfriendly to the federal idea. Nevertheless, now that the principle of autonomy has been conceded, it would be tragedy if there were strife over the details. On both sides there are allegations of outside interference: even if they are only partially founded, they serve to provoke passions in a part of Europe where the transition from fierce words to violence is not lengthy. There is a definite danger of foreign intervention, and until the Croat problem is finally settled it must decidedly be classed among the Danger Spots of Europe.

#### IV

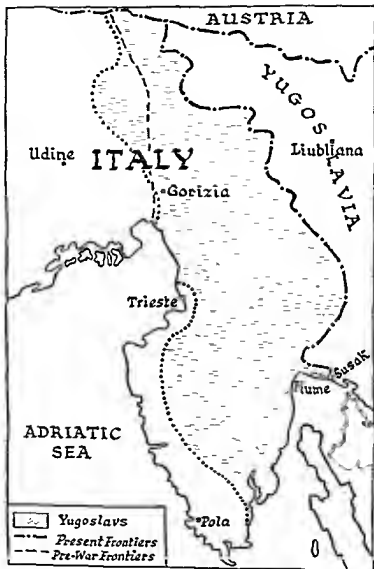
In 1914 Italy was the ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, she declined—quite legitimately—to enter the war on their side. Aggressive action was in no case contemplated or condoned by the alliance, and in any event Austria had plunged into the war without any attempt to co-operate with Italy. Further, the Treaty of Alliance, made in 1882, stated that it was not in any case directed against England. This saving clause was not inserted because Italy's extensive coastline put her at the mercy of the British fleet, but because of the traditional friendship between the two countries. Italy had never forgotten British moral and material support in her long struggle for freedom, and the idea of war with Britain was unthinkable. Consideration of these pre-War sentiments makes recent history unhappy reading!

At first it was assumed that Italy would remain neutral, but powerful factions saw an opportunity for the completion of Italian unity. Considerable numbers of Italians w still lived under Austrian-Hungarian rule, and if they were

to be freed the time was now or never. As in other instances, it was easier to negotiate with the other side. Demands to Austria brought unsatisfactory responses, but Britain and France were quite prepared to give away Austrian territory. By the Treaty of London, in April 1915, it was agreed that Italy should enter into the War on the Allied side, and that on its successful conclusion she should be allocated the Trentino, Istria and the Julian March, Northern Dalmatia, Valona (in Albania) and a share of Asia Minor. It is unnecessary to point out that these areas far exceeded those inhabited by Italians.

At the Peace Conference, therefore, Italy duly demanded the fulfilment of her bond. President Wilson, however, opposed her claims with unusual firmness—he went even so far as to issue a personal appeal to the Italian people over the heads of their Government. He argued that he knew nothing of these secret treaties—which scarcely abrogated them, nevertheless! Much more forcible was the contention that Italy had accepted his Fourteen Points, and that these principles over-rode any previous arrangement. If this were so, then certainly the Italian claims needed substantial modification, for the Brenner frontier and the Julian March could not be reconciled to any degree with “the rectification of the Italian frontiers on clearly recognizable national lines,” or autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary. President Wilson’s appeal had unexpected results: previously the Italians had been divided, moderate opinion favouring agreement with the new Yugoslavia; but now practically all parties, angered by the accusative tone of Wilson’s appeal, were so indignant that the hand of the Government was vastly strengthened—against Wilson!

A glance at the sketch map of the Julian March is worth while. The Julian March is the term applied to the Istrian peninsula, and the provinces of Gorizia, Trieste, and Fiume



THE JULIAN MARCH

—that is to say, all the north-eastern territory gained by Italy. It has a considerable Italian population—but actually the greater part of the district is preponderantly Yugoslav. Most of the towns, particularly in Istria, are largely Italian, together with the western coastal strip. The remainder, if President Wilson's principles were to be followed, would certainly have been allocated to Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Government was not slow to assert its claims. No sooner was the War over than Italian and Serb patrols were involved in "incidents," some of them alarming. The Yugoslavs demanded practically all the territory up to the old Italian frontier. They agreed that Trieste and several Istrian towns were largely Italian, but insisted that the surrounding countryside was entirely Yugoslav. The situation, indeed, strongly resembled Problem B. Further north the Yugoslav claim was clearer, for west of Gorizia and Trieste there was no substantial Italian element.

The Italians were aghast—it appeared that they had fought the War for nothing. The Yugoslavs drove the wound deeper when they pointed out that 50,000 Croats and Serbs were actually enclosed within the pre-War Italian frontier. This is quite true—until quite recently the district north-east of Udine was called Italian Slavia, and had an overwhelmingly Slav population. This was worse and worse! So far from gaining territory, President Wilson's principles would actually deprive Italy of a corner of one of her frontier provinces!

In the Julian March complete there were slightly more Croats and Slovenes than Italians. If you took the figure of Croats and Slovenes as half a million, you would not be far wrong. Recent Italian figures are quite untrustworthy, for anybody who could speak any Italian was classed as Italian. In one Croat commune the Italian census figures claimed that out of its considerable population there were only thirteen adult Croats and three Slovenes.



Yet these were credited with 3,060 children! Croats and Slovenes are reasonably fertile, and have large families, but at least Nature has her limits!

Even a census by these methods gave a total of 377,000 Croats and Slovenes. The Yugoslav figure is 600,000, so 500,000 is a reasonable compromise. A few thousands more or less do not affect the principle of the argument.

Despite President Wilson, Italy obtained a considerable proportion of her demands. Britain and France were uneasy; they had made specific promises to obtain Italy's support in the War, and now they wished to honour these promises so far as they could. Already Italy was disappointed in that only a microscopic share of the conquered African territory was allocated to her, and any aspirations to Asia Minor soon disappeared. The Peace Conference salved its conscience, too, by awarding Dalmatia to Yugoslavia.

There was little to be argued against this course. The Dalmatians are definitely Yugoslavs, a branch of the Croat family. On the sea coast, however, there are small Italian settlements, remnants of the days when Venice dominated the Adriatic. One of these, Zara, was handed to Italy, but the remainder of the coastal area joined its natural hinterland.

The Yugoslavs made no secret of their dissatisfaction over the allocation of the Julian March to Italy. Complicated by the question of Fiume—to which we shall return later—the two countries were for many years engaged in bitter controversy, not unmixed with violence on both sides. Let us follow for the moment the fortunes of the 500,000 Croats and Slovenes included within the Italian frontier—threequarters of them, naturally, are Slovenes, since the greater length of the frontier adjoins Slovenia.

As I wandered about Europe, I heard many complaints from minorities in all countries. In the aftermath of war

you must expect them: I have pointed out that it is too easy to say that if peoples would only work together with amity and toleration, then their troubles would never occur. Toleration is the rarest phenomenon in continental Europe. Even applying the necessary considerable discount for exaggeration, I had to agree that the lot of the Yugoslavs in Italy has not been too happy.

Now when small states were created or expanded at the Peace Conference, minority clauses were inserted by the Great Powers in the treaties of peace. By these, the small nations had to guarantee to their minorities the rights and opportunities available to their own nationals. I agree that in some cases the clauses have not proved worth the paper they were written on, but that is a matter of regret rather than of surprise.

But Italy, being a Great Power, was called upon to sign no minority agreements. A historic State of such wide culture and ancient civilization needed no legal safeguards to enforce liberal treatment of its subject peoples. The Italian Government at once confirmed this impression: "The people of alien nationality who are united with us must realize that every idea of oppression or of denationalization is foreign to us; that their language and their cultural institutions will be respected, and that they will enjoy all the privileges of our liberal and democratic constitution."

It would scarcely be denied, even in Italy, that this pledge has not been fulfilled. On the contrary, the imposition of Italian cultural and political thought on the Slav minorities has been firmly pursued. I would have taken small count of excesses in the months immediately succeeding the War, when moral values were low and neglected. But the Italianization of the north-eastern province has been systematic and continuous, and has occasioned anxious moments to the peace of Europe. Much

of the bad feeling between Italy and Yugoslavia can be traced to this disputed area.

A mere catalogue of the complaints would be startling. At first represented in the Italian parliament—the province of Gorizia returned four Slovene delegates out of five—gradually the minority was barred from public life, and for many years the half million Croats and Slovenes have not had a single representative in any official assembly. The scenes at the early elections were unworthy of any civilized Power—first d'Annunzio's *Avanti* and then Mussolini's Blackshirts made the free ballot impossible.

In 1913, there were 321 Slovene and 167 Croat schools in the territory: these were not sufficient, for 10,000 children were unable to go to school. But to-day there are no Slovene or Croat schools—they are all Italian. A child which dares to speak its own language in school is punished: Croat and Slovene teachers have been dismissed and replaced by Italians. The printing of Yugoslav primers, or even fairy stories in the Yugoslav languages, is a crime. Since the establishment of the Fascist regime, Croat and Slovene children are forced into the *Balilla* and *Avanguardisti*, and propaganda is poured into their receptive minds: they are even taught to scorn their own parents and race.

Of the excesses in the first flush of Fascism I say nothing, since they were common all over Italy, and merely intensified in the Julian March. It is important to explain that the process of Italianization was well under way before the rise of Mussolini, although under his regime the pace has been quickened. The petty persecutions have more than local importance, however: if an Italian Fascist seizes an Italian Socialist and beats him up, or forces him to swallow castor oil, or preaches his creed in any similar fashion, that is primarily a domestic affair. But if an Italian Fascist maltreats a Yugoslav, that is a different

matter. Ten million Yugoslavs are living next door, and you may be certain that no tale of persecution loses in its journey over the frontier. I traced one or two back, and found that they had been exaggerated a hundred per cent. The point was, however, that they had a firm basis of fact.

Social and cultural life in the Julian March was active in Austrian days: now all Croat and Slovene clubs which have not been set on fire have been closed down. The Slav Press had been completely suppressed by 1920. Names have been Italianized—more than one civil servant has been dismissed because he christened his child with a Slav name. It is sad to record that in Italy, home of the Catholic Church, Slav priests and monks have been maltreated and practically all of them have been driven from the country. Slav prayers and hymns are heard no more in Slav Churches. Thousands of Croat and Slovene peasants have been driven from their homes, to be replaced by Italian settlers. The last twenty years, in fact, has seen a vast and organized programme intended to change half a million Croats and Slovenes into Italians, their own wishes being of no account whatsoever.

Such, very briefly, are the complaints of the Yugoslavs of the Julian March. I have stated them at their mildest—any spokesman among them would accuse me of hopelessly understating the case. In Yugoslav itself my catalogue would be considered as absurdly inadequate.

"Put yourself in our position," said a Croat of Zagreb. "You are an Englishman living in Italy, let us say. You are surrounded by other Englishmen, living in English territory seized by Italy. Yet you are not allowed to teach English children in English: you will never see an English newspaper. You must not give your child a fairy book in English: even if you did, it could not read it, since it is taught in Italian. If there is an election, you may not stand as a candidate: you are permitted to vote, but only

as you are told. Otherwise you will be beaten up, maybe murdered. Your cultural life disappears—the English library in your town is deliberately burned, your social club wrecked. You are a religious man, but church service is a farce, since you cannot understand the sermon and the priest cannot understand your confession. If you dare to speak English in the streets, you may be arrested. If you are a party to a law case, then your suit is lost before it begins: in any case, you will not understand what is happening. If you meet your friends and sing some of your lovely old English folk songs, the police will break in your house. Dare to say one public word in defence of your English traditions, and you are promptly exiled to the Lipari Islands. Your children are forced to wear the uniform you detest, the uniform of tyranny. Your only privilege is to wear a uniform yourself—to be conscripted as a soldier and to die in the highlands of Abyssinia, helping to establish a Fascist Empire. Would you like to live like that?”

My answer was naturally emphatic. I was indeed concerned for the lot of the Yugoslavs in Italy. One expects excesses in newly created Balkan countries, maybe, but not in Italy. Yet, I repeat, the danger of the Julian March is not internal: it lies in its effects in Yugoslavia. More than once I have seen placid peasants in distant Bosnia or Serbia writhing in fury at the story of some new injustice or petty massacre which has just passed from mouth to mouth over the frontier and across Yugoslavia, gaining in horror as it travelled. Here, definitely, is seed for infinite trouble, which may delay for years before it produces its fruits.

The Yugoslav Government has recently and wisely attempted a *rapprochement* with Italy. At the moment it does not mean very much, for the opinions of the Yugoslav people were not consulted. But nobody, even in Italy, can have very much doubt what they are!

## V

Coupled with the problem of the Julian March is that of Fiume. Now in the Treaty of London which induced Italy's entry into the War, Fiume was definitely excluded from the promised rewards. It was the natural port of Croatia and Slovenia, and was to be held either for the Croatian State which some people then envisaged, or for the new Yugoslav State. Immediately after the armistice both Italian and Yugoslav troops entered the town, with many resultant clashes. Eventually Fiume was occupied by an international force pending its disposal.

Now although Fiume was a Hungarian port until 1918, its population was sixty per cent Italian—although many of the Italians were recent settlers. Here was the basis of the Italian claim. The Treaty of London had promised northern Dalmatia to Italy: President Wilson had refused, since Dalmatia was Yugoslav. Very well; by his own principle of self-determination Fiume was Italian. Nevertheless, the hinterland of the port was almost one hundred per cent Yugoslav, and its prosperity depended entirely upon Yugoslavia.

But economics mean little to fervent nationalists. In September 1919, the Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio raided Fiume with an irregular band of legionaries, and defied everybody, the newly-born League of Nations included. Without official Italian backing, he "ruled" Fiume, and his fanatic creed exasperated friends and opponents alike. Although eventually flung out of Fiume, he achieved his end. Italy and Yugoslavia eventually entered into direct negotiations. Fiume became part of Italy, connected with the Julian March by a narrow corridor. On the other hand, its eastern suburb, Susak, went to Yugoslavia.

D'Annunzio's raid was a black day for Fiume. When

eventually the city was legally allotted to Italy, there were processions of triumph through the streets. The Italian merchants, however, sat brooding in their homes: many of them had advocated the status of a free city for Fiume, working harmoniously with Yugoslavia. They were right, for d'Annunzio's nationalism spelled the ruin of Fiume.

It is an absurd position. In the event of war, Fiume would fall to the Yugoslavs in about five minutes. To-day Fiume is a joke or a tragedy, according to your outlook. Twice I have wandered round its harbour—excellently equipped, with many natural advantages. It was like a stroll round a dead city: some wharves bore such a look of desertion that obviously they had not been used for years: I fell over a railway line because it was covered in grass. One afternoon I made a census—it did not take long. In Fiume five vessels were loading or discharging. In Susak there were twenty-six.

In Fiume-Susak you have the most ironic situation in Europe: Fiume half-dead, bankrupt, a pauper living on Italian charity: Susak vigorously alive, expanding rapidly. New docks are built in Susak every year—and half away in Fiume are miles of unused quays and machinery! Susak has trebled its population, and is considerably bigger than Fiume! Furthermore—is surely the crowning farce—since Fiume is banished and Susak thriving, thousands of inhabitants of Fiume go to find work in Susak!

I stood on the notorious barbed wire bridge which connects Fiume and Susak. It took me longer to cross the bridge than any other open frontier of Europe. The whole was surrounded by barbed wire. On either side of the bridge thousands of people waited while leisurely and surly customs officials conducted amazing processes of formality. The transaction was deliberately made difficult: real people were almost impossible to get across. I have very

Yet, if that were all, Fiume would be of purely local account. As I have said, however, it must be classed with Vilna as one of the black spots of Europe. D'Annunzio's gospel of force inspired Mussolini, yet that was its least effect. The tragedy was that the first exponents of the doctrine of force won, and were allowed to retain the spoils.

It is idle to blame the statesmen of the day, leading their war-weary nations along the troubled road towards peace. They must have cursed these fanatic firebrands who added new problems to a fantastic world, but hesitated to meet force with force. Actually it was unnecessary: the force opposed to them was puny, and could have been met with firmness. The trouble was the old one—drift, lack of policy, compromise with principle, indecision. It ought to have been obvious that one successful defiance of a decision by conference would lead to others. The examples of Fiume and Vilna have served as the models for events besides which they themselves were puny. If d'Annunzio had been flung headlong out of Fiume, and tried and maybe executed as a rebel and murderer, then the history of Europe since 1919 would have been vastly different—and we would not now be counting up the number of sentences in the treaties of peace which mean anything at all.

It is necessary to return for a moment to the problems of the place of Croatia and Slovenia within Yugoslavia. I have stated that the Abyssinian War had wide repercussions in Yugoslavia. For fifteen years Croats and Slovenes had watched with dismay the Italianization of their brothers over the border. When the invasion of Abyssinia began, over 2,000 Croat and Slovene deserters came over the frontier into Yugoslavia. They were not cowards, but they failed to see that the conquest of a Roman Empire was any concern of theirs. Further, if Italy conquered Abyssinia,



where would she turn next? The answer was obvious, and disconcerting.

Now when Italy declared herself in favour of treaty revision, she was not **thinking** of the woes of Germany or Hungary: she was still rankling over the way in which she had been cheated of Dalmatia. "Dalmatia, Italian in its origin, ardent as a saint in its faith, had been recognized to be ours by the Pact of London. Dalmatia had been waiting for the victorious War with years of passion, and, holding in its bosom still the remains of Venice and of Rome, was now lopped off from our unity." So wrote Benito Mussolini. More than once he echoed the same sentiments: "We had won the War: we were utterly defeated in the diplomatic battle. We were losing—except Zara—the whole of Dalmatia, our land by tradition and history, by manners and customs, by the language talked and by the ardent and constant aspirations of the Dalmatians towards the Mother Country." It is not necessary to examine the claims in detail—for, except for scattered populations in the coastal towns, the Dalmatians do not speak Italian, but Serbo-Croat, and certainly have no aspiration to "return" to the Mother Country. And if the "tradition and history" argument were admitted here, it would assume Italy's right to the return of the entire Roman Empire! Even England could scarcely escape! The point is that Mussolini and millions of Italians believe that the claim of Italy to Dalmatia is more than justified. A strong patriotic Dalmatian League has maintained enthusiasm—and also the necessary *fury* when Yugoslav patriots, in a foolish excess of zeal, disfigured ancient Venetian monuments in Dalmatian towns. Mussolini himself has appeared at demonstrations of the Dalmatian League, waving a Dalmatian flag. A dozen times he has made speeches in far more flamboyant vein than the extracts quoted above.

The dictators are fond of proclaiming that they mean what they say—and one must recognize that Mussolini usually does. Consequently, he can scarcely blame the Yugoslavs because they take him at his word. His speeches about Dalmatia and the revival of the glories of the Roman Empire could scarcely be misinterpreted on the other side of the Adriatic. And, in spite of his sentimental references to Venice or Rome, Dalmatia is overwhelmingly Croat in its population. The Croats and Slovenes are acutely politically minded, and the signs of the times needed little consideration. And men who had discussed the rival merits of rule from Vienna, Budapest or Belgrade had only one opinion on the idea of rule from Rome!

## VI

We have seen that the Italians used arguments similar to those described in British law as "pleading inconsistent defences." They claimed Dalmatia, which was entirely Yugoslav, because of the Treaty of London: yet they also claimed Fiume on the basis of President Wilson's principles of self-determination. One cancelled the other: if one was right, the other must be wrong.

There is no intention in this chapter to cast the Italians as the villains of the peace. Like practically all nations in central or eastern Europe, they were out for all they could get. In the Julian March, Yugoslavia was the aggrieved party, and there is no argument about the basis of her complaint—that there are half a million Yugoslavs in Italy, contiguous to the Yugoslav frontier, and that the treatment of this minority has not always been worthy of a civilized Power. Yet Yugoslavia has an exactly similar province within her own frontiers, and the charge of inconsistent defences applies just as heavily to Yugoslavia as to Italy.

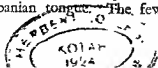
Down to the south of Yugoslavia, verging on Macedonia,

is a district which is almost sacred to the Serbian race. Here is an upland plain, surrounded by a ring of gaunt mountains: this was the site of the Serbian Battle of Hastings—a battle which had effects a hundred times more decisive than our own, for the Serbs went into serfdom to the Turks for 500 years. This is the plain of Kossovo, the Field of the Blackbirds.

In the thirteenth century Serbia was a great empire, occupying a considerable part of the Balkans, with the city of Prizren as its proud capital. The Serb armies fought desultory battles with the advancing Turks over a period of a generation, but on St. Vitus Day, 1389, the Tsar Lazar faced the full army of the Sultan Murad. Weakened by internecine strife—part of the Serbian army marched off the field at the critical moment of the battle—the Serbs were hopelessly beaten. For nearly 500 years the Turks ruled the Serbian lands, with the Serbs as their slaves.

The dread field of Kossovo was introduced into every Serbian legend and folk song: naturally, it was a plain of blood and terror, of gloom and despair. Peasants fled from its unhappy memories, and others were exterminated by roving, uncontrolled bands of Turkish irregulars. For 300 years the district was almost deserted, peopled only by families of wandering herdsmen. Then the Turks settled Kossovo with Albanians: they, being Moslems, were not subject to the "evangelizing" drives which had helped to depopulate the plain. Thus a new problem was born.

Now in some European countries, as we have seen, there is occasional argument as to a man's nationality. The Kashubians and Mazurians, for example, are claimed as both Germans and Poles. But at least there is never any quarrel as to whether a man is a Serb or an Albanian. As I wandered about Kossovo, the white skull cap of the Albanian was in evidence everywhere, and all about I heard the Albanian tongue. The few Serbian families



were mostly recent settlers, living miserably under housing conditions unfit for cattle, reclaiming land which had lain fallow for 500 years. In the infrequent towns, however, the Serb element is much more apparent. Prizren, the ancient capital, has a population of 25,000, almost equally divided between Serbs and Albanians.

Prizren retains few traces of its ancient glories, for it



ALBANIANS AND MACEDONIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA

was actually Turkish until 1912, and was one of the most eastern cities in Europe. Drainage is augmented by streams diverted down the middle of streets, carrying off a quantity of refuse but depositing more by its flanks. Moslem mosques and minarets dominate the skyline—some of them built with the stones of demolished Christian churches. Conditions of life are frankly primitive, and make Prizren one of the most interesting cities of the Balkans.

Here, then, is a problem analagous to that of the Julian March. Adjoining the *Albanian frontier* is a considerable area predominantly inhabited by Albanians—by the pre-War figures this statement goes without argument. Yet it is part of Yugoslavia, and Albania has never ceased to voice its complaint.

Kossovo is an excellent subject for a debating society. The arguments would run:

ALBANIAN: The land is ours, because it is inhabited by Albanians.

SERB: Yes, but they are an artificial population—they were planted there by the Turks after the indigenous inhabitants had been expelled or exterminated.

ALBANIAN: Indigenous inhabitants! Why, Albanians occupied the whole of the Balkan peninsula long before the Serbs ever heard of it! When they replanted us in Kossovo, the Turks were merely giving us back our own.

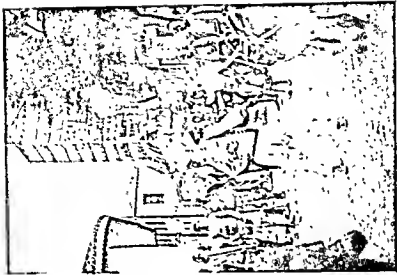
SERB: Maybe you were there thousands of years ago, but we held Kossovo for five centuries. Then we were defeated by the Turks, not the Albanians—why, at Kossovo, Albanians fought beside us! Besides, how can you expect us to give up ground which is steeped in our history.

There we have the crucial argument. Economically Kossovo is of no great account, but historically it is the outstanding district of Yugoslavia. Including both its greatest battlefield and its ancient capital, how can Yugoslavia—the new Serbia—be expected to relinquish it, so it is argued? Suppose France, on however well-reasoned grounds, claimed a district including Hastings and Winchester—what would an Englishman say? The argument is more forceful than it appears at first sight: there is more sentiment in most of us than we know.

Naturally, however, the Albanian viewpoint was not the same. Further, the traditional Albanian argument is not

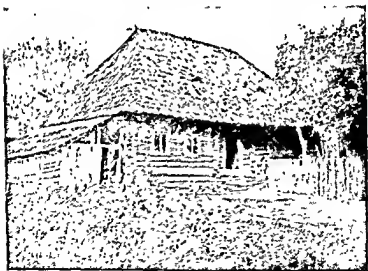


On the edge of Montenegro



On the edge of Kosovo—50 miles from the Albanian frontier

ALBANIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA



(Above) A main road in Bessarabia

(Below) A hundred million peasants in Eastern Europe live in shacks like this

conducted with words. For four years after the Armistice the Yugoslav-Albanian frontier was not settled, and there was a period of desultory warfare. After the frontier had been demarcated, and Kossovo allocated to Yugoslavia, local strife continued. The Macedonian terrors were repeated here. The Albanian tribesmen are masters of the art of guerilla warfare. Yugoslav patrols were ambushed with consistent regularity. It was almost impossible to catch the murderers, for the wild mountain country is almost entirely populated by Albanians. The administration of the region was intensely difficult. A Yugoslav official who volunteered for service at Prizren was adjudged to have committed suicide. A military post was established at every kilometre of the roads, but the lawlessness continued.

Then the Yugoslav Government adopted a measure we have found efficacious on the north-west frontier of India. The Albanian organization is tribal, and the Yugoslav Government made each tribe responsible for its own area. If it kept the peace, then it was paid a subsidy: if violence occurred within its area, then the whole tribe was punished. This was the kind of justice the wild tribesmen could understand, and the disorders rapidly diminished. Nevertheless, even in 1930, it was quite unsafe to travel here, for there were numerous bands of komitadji—or brigands, if you will—at large in the mountains. One of these eventually went too far. They caught a well-known Yugoslav general, stripped off his uniform, and sent him back to Prizren in his birthday suit. Shooting soldiers is one thing and stripping generals is another. Punitive expeditions were organized and the brigands rounded up. I saw one very salutary method of warning—the bodies of the dead brigands were paraded through the street, for others to observe and ponder.

When I revisited Kossovo in 1935, the district was



"pacified"—or shall I say, cowed. There were still periodic outbursts, but most of the trouble was caused by exiles from Albania, rebels against King Zog. The Yugoslav Government watched these gentlemen very carefully, and it is now possible for any man to travel to Kossovo and Prizren without the slightest fear of danger. Yet even to-day the local police are fully armed; nor when I looked at the tall, tough Albanian highlanders, did I blame them.

It seems absurd to represent Kossovo as even a minor among the Danger Spots of Europe. True, Albania nursed a grievance, but what could so small a country do against the might of Yugoslavia? Yet Kossovo has already affected the course of history. When Albania decided to westernize, it looked around for a friendly neighbour to finance the operation—for there was scarcely so much as a road in Albania. Obviously, the country which advanced the money would have a hold and influence over Albania. There were only two countries interested—Albania's neighbours, Yugoslavia and Italy. The Italians were not popular in Albania, but the Yugoslavs were anathema—were they not holding tens of thousands of Albanians in thrall in the plain of Kossovo? Had they not utterly refused Albania's claim to her rightful frontier? Perforce, therefore, Albania chose Italy as her protector. Soon Albania owed Italy millions of pounds which it could never hope to repay. Consequently, when Mussolini chose to defy the League of Nations, he could always depend upon one vote—Albania would always cast its vote on his side. After he had left the League, Albania held a very useful watching brief.

The seizure of Albania by Italy has given a new orientation to the problem of Kossovo. For the moment the tension is eased—since there is no Albania, there is no clamour for Kossovo; nor are the Albanians of Yugoslavia particularly anxious to transfer themselves to Italian rule. Yet the potential dangers are large. We have already seen

that there are many points of possible dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia—Kossovo is an added irritant, and an excellent pretext should Italy ever need one. As "protector" of Albania, she might "hear the call" of the "oppressed" Albanians of Kossovo. Alternatively, irreconcilable Albanians might flee to exile with their brothers of Kossovo, there to plot the overthrow of Italian rule—this is a supposition by no means unlikely. Wars have begun a more flimsy excuse than those which Kossovo could so easily provide.

## VII

For a country so small, Albania has already occasioned a surprising amount of argument in the chancelleries of Europe.

It is a remarkable land. Except for a narrow coastal strip, Albania is entirely mountainous—high ranges enclosing some of the loveliest valleys in Europe. For centuries the Albanians have lived a primitive life in their isolated highlands. Foreign invaders came and went, occupied the coastal strip, and claimed to hold Albania, but their authority ended where the mountains began. Even the Turks, who "ruled" Albania for 400 years, did no more than to utilize the tribal organization of the Albanians for their own purposes.

During that time the only law in Albania was found in the code of Lek, an Albanian Moses. It was based on blood for blood, and although full of protestations of honour it included the worst features of the vendetta. Thousands of Albanians were killed every year in family feuds, and sometimes whole tribes were exterminated. Western civilization and culture were unknown, and the life of the Albanian scarcely differed from that of his ancestor in medieval days.

Although Albania suffered less from the Turks than other Balkan states—for seventy per cent of the people

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of war; then Greece was induced to pay an indemnity which was sufficient solace to Italy's honour.

By this time, too, more had been heard of the young Home Secretary who had resisted the Yugoslav invasion. He had become first prime minister, then president: and in 1928 he declared himself King Zog I of Albania. Since that time he had to face almost annual insurrections, most of them led by tribal chiefs jealous of his rise to power. On the whole, however, his rule became stabilized, and his control of Albania was more real than that of any other ruler for a thousand years. He worked energetically for the modernization of his little land. With the aid of a remarkable corps of British officers he organized an efficient gendarmerie. His army was trained by Italians, and with Italian money were built schools and public buildings—and new roads, primarily of military importance, connecting the principal towns, and radiating to the Yugoslav frontier.

Mussolini never disguised his real interests in Albania. Its oil is important, and its metals may be useful, but the real value of Albania is strategic. Italian control of her coast compensates for the "loss" of Dalmatia, and makes the Adriatic Sea into an Italian lake. In the event of war with Yugoslavia—a very real possibility until a year ago—Albania offered a serious threat to the Yugoslav flank; and the Albanian army, small though it might be, was a valuable reinforcement—the Turks used to esteem the Albanians highly as warriors, and we have seen that they have no friendship for the Yugoslavs. Although it is only the size of Wales and has a population of less than a million, *Italian strategic conception was quite sound*—Albania has an importance far beyond its size.

But Mussolini had to learn a lesson which has been taught to us by bitter experience—that a benefactor is seldom loved. Even if his intentions pass the highest

moral standards, he is apt to outstay his welcome—and the humblest Albanian highlander was under no delusions about Italian interest in his country. There was a clash of temperament, too. In spite of all the Italians have done—and their material achievements have been considerable—the Albanians do not like the Italians. That is all there is to it, but it is important. I heard bitter complaints of the arrogance of Italian officers, who acted as if they ruled the country. When one of them arrested me, the Albanian police released me at once, simply because I had been arrested by an Italian.

There were people who believed that King Zog had sold himself to Italy, despite the wishes of his people, but this was untrue. In 1926 Italy had been given the right to land troops in Albania for its defence—presumably against Yugoslavia. But in 1931 King Zog refused to renew the treaty. For three years relations were strained—culminating in an Italian naval demonstration off Albania's coast.

Then a strange scene was played. Without official appeal, Albanian tribesmen streamed from their mountain valleys, ready to defy the whole might of Italy!

Nevertheless, in succeeding years Italian influence was strengthened again. Albania's oil and metal resources were entirely under Italian control: Italian officers trained the Albanian army, and a firm alliance was made. Apparently Italy had everything she could possibly want.

On April 5th, 1939, there was wild rejoicing in Albania. Singing and cheering crowds mobbed King Zog's modest palace in Tirana, and in the wild valleys highlanders discharged their rifles in a *feu de joie*. Always his subjects had looked to him to marry and found a dynasty. There were difficulties, for Zog was a Moslem, and not every noble family would consider such an alliance. But a year earlier the king had delighted his country by taking as

his wife a lady of distinguished family, half Hungarian and half American. And now she had duly presented him with a son and heir. Here was the one thing needful to consolidate Albania—the certainty of succession after centuries of unrest.

The new prince was two days old when his inheritance was rudely stolen from him. On Good Friday Italian troops landed without warning. Resistance was desultory—the Albanian army totalled only 12,000 men, and within a week Albania was overrun. King Zog and his invalid queen made a precarious journey over the unfriendly mountains to seek refuge in Greece.

§ The real reason for Italy's act of aggression is not yet shown. The Italian apologia declared that Albania was annexed because King Zog had proposed that Italy should send troops to Albania for the purpose of attacking Yugoslavia. No one outside Italy, and not many people inside, coached any credence to this fantastic plea.

§ It is more probable that Italy was attempting to force King Zog into a closer collaboration than he or his people wished, and that he adopted his attitude of 1931. The moment of 1939, however, was sterner and morals lower, and he was promptly bundled off his throne. It was given out that Italy had been invited to take Albania under her protection, and a new government of Albanian "patriots" was set up—most of them were Zog's opponents, including the aforesaid jealous tribal chiefs. A few days later, in the fashion of these things, all pretence of Albanian autonomy was dropped and the initial promises forgotten. An Italian Lieutenant-General rules the land with the assistance of an army of 70,000 men. As a measure of assurance, part of the Albanian army has been removed to Italy. Sections of the Fascist party are to be formed throughout Albania, and the Italian legal and penal codes are to be introduced immediately. Albania to-day, in fact, is no more than an Italian province.

Is this the end of Albania? I doubt it. I lived for a while among the Ghegs of High Albania, and I never saw anything to equal *their fierce unyielding courage*. I would not care for the task of holding Albania down, even with 70,000 soldiers. Death is only an ordinary risk to an Albanian tribesman. I recall a story told to me by a Serbian officer. During the terrible retreat of 1916, the Serbs were harassed by Albanian irregulars. My friend captured a band of seven of them, who were duly court-martialled and sentenced to death. Ammunition was scarce, so it was decided to cut their throats. After the first two men had died, the remaining Albanians obligingly lifted their heads to expose their throats, so as to make the task of the executioner easier, and went to their death with a grim jest. I would not care to visit High Albania to-day—the tribesmen are the best guerilla fighters in Europe, and I might be mistaken for an Italian.

Attempting to find some justification for Italy's action, it is true that Albania had a high strategic importance. The Adriatic becomes an Italian lake. Far more important, Yugoslavia is threatened on yet another flank, and now has scant possibilities of aid from potential allies. (Alternatively—and a point not to be overlooked—Italy is now better placed to give aid to Yugoslavia should the latter be attacked by Germany.) Yet for practical purposes Italy already held those advantages. To-day she has neutralized one of them. Instead of Albania as an ally, she has a distraction, needing a large permanent garrison.

The only feasible explanation of her action is one of pride—one of the greatest opponents of European appeasement. It seemed that all the gains of the Axis were falling to Germany, and it was now time that Italy showed a dividend. Moreover, Italy must move quickly, for the new force and temper of the democracies might soon make such adventures dangerous. Albania was the easiest conquest *within reach*.

The full story of the rape of Albania cannot yet be told—until King Zog himself chooses to speak. Yet when there is trouble in south-eastern Europe, Albania will be concerned—not necessarily in the way its “protectors” imagine.

### VIII

Bulgaria may be classed among the more backward countries of Europe, but a more interesting land I never hope to visit. Scenically its attractions are only moderate. The mountains that emerge from the Danube plain are stolid rather than majestic, and the rivers are insignificant. Some of the southern valleys are, however, unforgettable—the famous Valley of Roses, whence comes most of the world’s supply of attar of roses, is unique. Bulgaria is almost entirely pastoral or agricultural. Its peasants cultivate their strips of land by methods which have scarcely changed since Biblical days. They are a fine, sturdy race: of great reputation in battle, but friendly and hospitable. The great lack of Bulgaria to date has been leaders: or, alternatively, luck, for she has backed the wrong horse with unenviable consistency.

The history of Bulgaria runs parallel with that of Serbia. In the sixth century the country we now know as Bulgaria was settled by the Serbs or South Slavs. The Bulgars arrived a hundred years later. They were a tribe of horsemen of Turanian stock, akin to the Huns. They were pagans, fierce and barbarous: they lived by war and loot. From their Asiatic home they had passed into Russia, and thence they descended upon the Danube plain.

The agricultural Slav tribes were in no condition to meet such warriors; nor could the Byzantine Empire withstand their violent onslaughts. Rapidly the middle Balkans were over-run, and a Bulgarian Empire established. It crumbled and fell, in the fashion of its day, weakened by internal dissension, but in the twelfth century a second Empire emerged, with its capital at Tarnovo.



There may be a more fascinating city in Europe than Trnovo, but I have yet to find it. The little river Yantra forms almost a figure 8 in forcing its way through the northern range of Balkan mountains, and Trnovo is built on the slopes, so that the roof of one house touches the foundations of the next. One day archæologists will excavate the rest of Trnovo, and reveal its ancient splendours: on its now deserted hills, did I but rip up a sod with my boot, ancient stones were revealed beneath. And opposite and ~~standing~~ the emperor's castle is a Forest of Nightingales. was decided ~~for~~ the Bulgarian Empire was supreme in the had died, the ~~re~~ Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and northern heads to expose ~~in~~ its domain. At that time, on the authority the executioner ~~usaders~~, Bulgarian civilization was as high grim jest. I ~~wore~~. This is extraordinary, when it is recalled—the tribesmen ~~s~~ entered the Balkans as pagan plunderers. and I might be ~~extraordinary~~ is the manner in which the

Attempting ~~to~~ ~~sed~~ their culture upon the conquerors. The it is true that ~~A~~ settled Serbs was naturally higher than The Adriatic beco ~~idic~~ raiders who conquered them. The Yugoslavia is ~~three~~ ~~exterminate~~ the Serbs in the fashion of scant possibilities ~~of~~ ~~ter~~ using them as serfs, inter-married—and a point not the course of generations adopted their placed to give aid ~~to~~ ~~ge~~. Thus the Bulgarian race as we know by Germany.) Yet ~~ly~~ descendants of Serbs and Bulgars, the those advantages. ~~obably~~ overwhelming its rival. The Instead of Albania ~~to~~ to-day is akin to Serb: both might be a large permanent ~~g~~s of an original Slav tongue.

The only feasible ~~c~~ of the Turks into Europe the stories pride—one of the ~~g~~ ~~t~~ ~~bia~~ have a melancholy similarity. For ment. It seemed ~~th~~ ~~irs~~ lived miserably under Turkish rule, to Germany, and ~~i~~ ~~evitable~~ series of campaigns had been ~~div~~ ~~y~~ Moreover ~~d~~ Bulgarian Empire emerge—a tiny ~~i~~ ~~tempe~~ ~~ient~~ glory. We have already seen the ~~ree~~ ~~d~~ ~~ayed~~ in the final wars of freedom in ~~reach~~.

1912-13—and how she ruined everything in her treacherous turn on her allies to gain the coveted Macedonia. These Balkan wars left more than one evil legacy of potential danger.

Western opinion on Balkan states is frequently scathing. It is quite true that standards of living are low, and education backward. More disconcerting is the standard of government, for most Balkan countries have an appalling record of conspiracies, assassinations, and corruption. Yet judgment must be tempered with fairness. The long Turkish rule must never be forgotten. The Balkan peoples themselves had no rights—except to pay extravagant taxes. Most of them were completely illiterate, and the few educated men were those who had adopted Turkish culture.

When, after bitter struggles, these peoples regained their freedom, almost automatically they adopted democratic systems. But democracy is not so simply installed. It is the most difficult political system to work: it demands an intelligent and reasonably educated electorate; and it stands on tradition. In the Balkans it never had a chance. In most of the new countries power was immediately seized by the few professional politicians available—trained in the Ottoman school. These men were a bitter legacy.

Bulgaria was no better served by her statesmen than any other Balkan country. Here and there arose a fervent patriot, but most of them were of the type only too common in their district and day. Even in the last generation, when the other Balkan states have been assimilating Western political morals, Bulgaria has not always been happy. The influence of Macedonia can be traced—the Macedonian is sharper-witted but much less scrupulous than the Bulgar, and has achieved remarkable representation among official and influential positions. It is difficult for a Westerner to credit Balkan corruption. Between 1878 and 1926 Bulgaria had ninety-six cabinet ministers.

Of these exactly one half were tried and condemned for embezzlement of public funds. But most of them were amnestied by the Tsar.

The Macedonians have provided the driving force of the Greater Bulgaria movement. Now that Macedonia itself is temporarily quieted, they have directed the attention of Bulgaria patriots to the Dobrudja and Thrace: the Dobrudja has never been far from the thoughts of the humblest peasant, but the demand for eastern Thrace has been artificially stimulated.

One only of the gains of the Balkan wars of 1912-13 was Bulgaria allowed to keep—a corridor of territory through Thrace to the port of Dedeagatch. After the World War, the territory was claimed by and awarded to Greece. Like most Balkan borderlands, it had a mixed population—Greeks, Turks and Bulgars. The latter numbered only 60,000 out of 213,000, and on ethnic grounds the Greek claim could not be denied.

The Treaty of Neuilly stipulated that "free economic outlets upon the Aegean Sea shall be guaranteed to Bulgaria under conditions to be fixed at a later date." Irredentists argued that this implied territorial access to the sea, and ignored Greece's offers—including a free zone in Salonika, which would have been infinitely more useful than Dedeagatch, where anchorage is precarious and port facilities poor.

To-day, after a long period of quietude, there is a renewed demand for the return of the Thracian Corridor. It is by no means unanimous: the peasants are not keenly interested, and there are big business interests directly opposed to it, for large sums of money have been expended on Bulgaria's Black Sea ports. This is not a serious problem: with no strong ethnic claim, all Bulgaria's reasonable needs could be met by special facilities in Greek

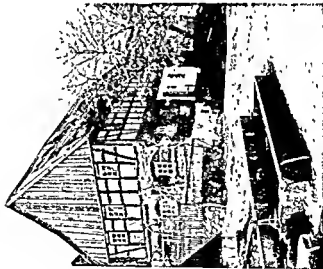
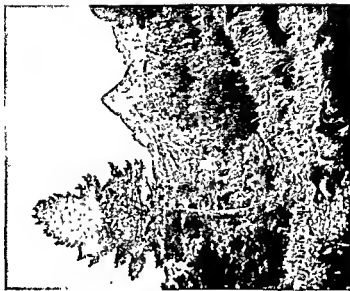
But if the Bulgarians are not over-interested in Thrace, there is scarcely an eye which does not turn to another troubled frontier, at the opposite corner from Macedonia: the Roumanian Dobrudja.

## IX

Had I been asked six years ago to name the site of the fuse most likely to ignite the European tinder-box, I might legitimately have named the Dobrudja. To-day this province—of which nine Englishmen out of ten have never heard—has lost some of its troublous potentialities, but the problem is by no means solved, and its dangers are always latent—they have been overshadowed by more showy incidents.

It is one of the *petis stage* that the location of *Uzar* by the powder-magazine *by* f post-War Europe s from year to year. The powder-magazine *by* ne as it did in 1914, but for years before 1914 *fat-sig...* and men expected the exploding spark to be struck in the Balkans. Indeed, with brief exceptions at Tangier and Agadir, it never looked like being struck anywhere but the Balkans. But to-day the point of immediate danger has strayed from one corner of Europe to another, covering every district named in this book. Yet even to-day there are shrewed judges who, while appreciating the potential dangers of the Polish Corridor, Danzig, Silesia, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine, Hungary, the Brenner and the Julian March, still look anxiously towards the Balkans. And, in the Balkans, not even Macedonia is a more dangerous breeder of unrest than the Dobrudja.

The Dobrudja is a province of south-east Roumania, between the Danube and the Black Sea. It is not distinguished physically—there are some ranges of low hills, great swamps bordering the Danube, and waterless plains in the interior. It is fairly fertile, however, and can sup-



IN THE SUDETEN DEUTSCH COUNTRY

It can be imagined that the position within the new State was a difficult one. The German portion of the population, brooding over the change of fortune, was in no mood for co-operation. It is rather fatuous at this stage for the Germans to claim that they had no share in the planning of Czechoslovakia—at the time they preferred to stand aside. It is, of course, quite easy to understand their feelings, but the fact remains that for some years after the War the Germans refused all co-operation with the Czechs. There were many complaints of petty persecution, for a reversal of fortune is bound to lead to incidents. The Czechs were not deficient in statesmen, but many of their officials were tactless, and the temporary feeling of insecurity bred intolerance. But the new Czechoslovakia settled down remarkably quickly, and her record of excesses is very mild compared with that of any other Continental Power.

So long as the German Reich was weak and disorganized, so long were the complaints of the German minority in Czechoslovakia purely local. I investigated many of them, but my impression was that compared with minority complaints in other countries they were trivial. If a Pole domiciled in Germany had the privileges of a German in Czechoslovakia, he would count himself a happy man.

As we shall notice in our hurried glance at Europe's Danger Spots, one of the principal minority complaints is that organized efforts at denationalization are being made, and the claim is not without foundation in a dozen countries. In Italy, for example, live half a million Yugoslavs and a quarter of a million Germans, and determined efforts have been made to change these people into Italians. We shall see that the use of the native language has been repressed, newspapers and cultural societies closed down, and education given exclusively in Italian. In Czechoslovakia, however, the cultural activities of the Germans

were undiminished. Of 446,000 German children in 1935, 423,000 attended German schools: the remainder lived in districts where there were only a few Germans in a Czech territory, and where separate schools would be impossible. There was never any attempt to repress the German language. By the terms of the minority clauses of the peace treaty, in any district where two-thirds of the inhabitants were German, all State documents and communications, and proceedings in courts, were made in the German language. In districts where the Germans formed from twenty to sixty-six per cent, both German and Czech languages were used. Where the proportion of Germans was less than twenty per cent, official communications were in Czech, but if a German did not understand Czech he was entitled to an official interpreter. This appeared to be a reasonable compromise in a difficult situation. Actually, of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Germans in Czechoslovakia,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million lived in districts where the German language was used, and a further 600,000 in districts using both German and Czech.

The Germans were also fully represented in the Czechoslovak parliament, and at the moment of crisis had seventy-two representatives in the Chamber of Deputies, and thirty-seven in the Senate.

The principal cause of discontent among the Germans a year or so ago was simple enough. In the early days of the Republic, the Czechs did not trust the Germans. This may have been a mistake, but at least the German attitude at the time was not very helpful. Consequently, local officers administering the German districts were usually Czech—they were German-speaking, of course, but not Germans. Now in an outlying district the local men—the policemen, magistrates, and tax officers—are every bit as important as members of parliament. The Germans claimed with reason that such posts should be filled by Germans—the Czechs argued that they could scarcely appoint Germans

as government officials when their loyalty to the government was suspect.

I came across many cases of petty irritation. I recall a Czech postman in a village preponderantly German. His life was made a misery—and, being human, he retaliated. When the Germans refused all forms of co-operation, even ostracized him, he replied by working fiercely by rule and regulation—and there is no more effective form of strike than the strict adherence to rules intended as a general guide.

But Dr. Milan Hodza, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, did a very brave thing—he admitted himself wrong! In February 1937—a year before Hitler's march into Austria—Dr. Hodza undertook that in future the Germans should receive their full share of government posts, and a new law was put into immediate operation. Naturally, it was impracticable to appoint Germans suddenly to twenty-two per cent of official jobs, but the task of replacement was immediately commenced. Here at last was a chance of real conciliation.

It was accepted by three of the four German parties. At that time Herr Henlein and his party could claim fifty-five per cent of the German population as followers. The remainder were divided between the German Social Democratic, Agrarian, and Catholic Parties, each proportionately represented in Parliament, *and each with a minister in the Cabinet*. These three parties were known as the Activist Group: instead of pining over the past or planning for the unknown future, they accepted the present position and prepared to make the best of it.

I wandered about the Sudeten Deutsch country in September 1937, and was pleasantly surprised at the difference in the atmosphere. The change in a few months was all for the better, and I came away very optimistic. The Activist parties were now co-operating loyally with



the central Government at Prague, and the effects of the new law were already obvious. Henlein's stock was definitely falling—the growing recovery of trade assisting. Opposition parties flourish when times are bad. Hitler could never have emerged from a prosperous Germany.

Then came the march into Austria, and in a night the new hopes faded. Two of the Activist parties withdrew their support from the Government, and went over to Henlein. One of their arguments was obvious. Hitler had marched into Austria—next he would march into Czechoslovakia. We know what happens to his opponents—let us therefore get on the right side quickly.

The sudden *volte face* was not quite as selfish as that, of course. These men were Germans and, Nazis or no, had a deep sympathy for men of common stock. If they were convinced that Czechoslovakia was a stable State, likely to endure, they were willing to co-operate: but if Czechoslovakia were to be disintegrated, why should they fight the battles of an alien race? It is unquestionable that there was more than apprehension in their action. The general opinion in Europe is that the dictatorship Powers are winning in their struggles against the democracies, and that vast body of people who hold no firm political convictions, but sway with the wind, are for the moment turning to the Fascist side. That is a tragedy: for the man of principle, even if opposed to our own, we can always hold respect, but the man who scuttles to the winning side is a danger—to himself as well as to others.

### III

Herr Henlein's demands were comprehensive. He wanted an autonomous German State within the Czechoslovak Republic—entirely self-governing, almost independent of Prague, and in full "cultural relation" with Germany—with

full freedom to adopt and implement Nazi "ideology" (including Jew-baiting and concentration camps for opponents). The Czechs resisted this demand. First, they claimed with justice, the scheme was as impossible geographically to-day as it was in 1919. As we saw, the Germans lived in eight groups, with intermediate Czech territories: a "ribbon" State to-day would now include well over half a million Czechs with 2½ million Germans.

The Czechs argued that a Nazi state within a democracy is impossible—that the clash of ideas and ideals would make the scheme unworkable. Further, the Czechs believed that such an autonomous State would soon be absorbed into Germany, and they were readily able to quote confirmatory chapter and verse from Hitler's speeches and book. "The German Empire must, as a State, include all Germans. . . . The frontiers of 1914 mean nothing for the future of the German nation." So wrote Herr Hitler, and he can scarcely grumble if the Czechs believed what he says.

Not only would the loss of the German-speaking districts be a great economic blow to Czechoslovakia, but the strategic position would be impossible. The mountain barrier was readily defensible, and could only be forced by a considerable army. With the Germans over the mountains and in the plains, it was reasonably claimed, the threat in war-time would be overwhelming.

It is important to point out that in 1937 Henlein made no claim to political union with Germany. I heard him speak and found him most moderate. Indeed, in December, 1935, he had declared categorically that territorial revision of treaties was no solution, that it was impossible to detach the German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia from the republic and that pan-Germanism was at least as disastrous as pan-Slavism and would lead to catastrophe! He also emphasized that he had never even seen Hitler and that his party had no connection whatsoever with the German

Nazi organization! Memories have never been shorter in Europe than they are to-day.

The march into Austria altered the entire tempo of the Czech piece. Hitler's sense of timing is uncanny. The problem was natural, but the crisis was artificial, stirred to the surface at an appropriate moment. The *anschluss* altered the situation in a night, and the man who had never seen Hitler now flew periodically to Berlin for instructions. No wonder the Czech Government suspected his protestations of loyalty. How could they admit him to the cabinet, as he claimed, under such conditions? Could they discuss defence schemes in his presence, for example—when he might next day make a present of their secrets to Hitler?

The march into Austria provided the moment, the trade depression the theme.

It was a matter of pure chance that some of the trades hardest hit by the world economic depression—textiles, glass, and porcelain—happened to be located in the German-speaking districts. Actually, the man who induced the biggest hardships to the Bohemian Germans was Herr Hitler! Before his rise Germany was the largest importer of Czech manufactures, but new import restrictions made trade exceedingly difficult: Czech exports to Germany fell by seventy per cent.

I found many districts where unemployment was acute because of the deliberate closing of works—German controlled—in order to keep up “ring” prices or to avoid excessive competition. This may be legitimate business—it is common in England—but it is scarcely the fault of the Czechs.

One very human influence affected the diversion of trade from Germany to Czechoslovakia. A considerable proportion of European commerce is in Jewish hands, and rather naturally trade with Germany is not over-popular. I remember once chancing across a glass factory in the

Sudeten Deutsch country. It was very prosperous—working overtime, with a large programme of extensions in hand.

The proprietor greeted me with the Nazi salute, and a photograph of Hitler adorned his office. He began a long tale of petty woes.

"You seem fairly prosperous here," I remarked.

"Oh, we certainly can't grumble about business. Our turnover has doubled in the last two years."

"Who are your principal customers?"

"Most of our stuff goes to France: after that, Prague is our best market."

Further conversation revealed a remarkable position. One of the biggest buyers of glass in France is a Jewish-controlled firm. The excesses in Germany drove their trade from German firms, and the French buyer sought a new supplier in Czechoslovakia. Hence my friend's sudden prosperity!

"But," I broke in on a denunciation of Prague, "it seems to me that if you were to join up with Germany you would lose all your business."

"Who said anything about joining up with Germany?" he asked abruptly.

An adorer of Hitler, he did not want to join Germany! He was even prepared to argue in public that his Führer had been far too drastic in his treatment of the Jews!

As I wandered around the country in 1937, I found that the demand for union with Germany had been absurdly exaggerated. The younger and noisier elements were emphatic, but they are never as important as they think they are. Most sections of the people demanded some sort of autonomy, but even here ideas were mixed. Many of Henlein's most fervent supporters agreed with my glass-making friend: times were good or bad, according to your trade, but union with the Reich would scarcely improve

them. More moderate opinion favoured making the best of the situation, and co-operation with Prague. There was a frankly expressed apprehension of the extension of Nazi rule over northern Bohemia, and its methods had no appeal. Not for nothing had these people drawn their culture from Vienna, and not from Berlin. A hard world of drills, concentration camps, and one-way mental traffic did not appeal to these easy-going Bohemian-Austrian Germans who would rather dance than goose-step.

As I left Germany I was saluted with "*Heil, Hitler!*" My first greeting in Czechoslovakia—from a German—was "*Grüss Gott!*" There is a lot of difference between "*Heil, Hitler!*" and the grace of God.

#### IV

It may appear that, despite my disclaimer of bias, I have leaned towards the Czechoslovak side. If that is so, its cause was the extravagant and ill-supported claims of the German propaganda. On the human side of the problem I can well appreciate the German point of view—the fallen pride when the ruling race became the subjects; the strong fellow feeling with Germans of common stock. If the Sudeten claim in 1937 had been a straightforward demand for union with Germany, I could have understood it. But it was not; then, at any rate, the greater part of the German protest consisted of denunciation of the Czechs. "Germans are unable to secure fundamental human rights or freedom of political opinion and action." This was nonsense. There was infinitely wider political freedom in Czechoslovakia than Germany. In Prague I was received in Henlein's offices and handed literature which almost came under the category of sedition. There is no Socialist office in Berlin where I may collect information. The Germans of Czechoslovakia had over 150 daily and weekly newspapers, and some of their articles would have been classed

as seditious even in England. How many journals are at the disposal of opposition parties in Germany?

The officials of the Henlein party who presented their case were friendly and by no means extravagant in their conversation. I appreciated their company, but they were unlucky. I have already mentioned some of the incidents of casual wanderings in the Sudeten Deutsch country—sometimes alone, sometimes with a Henlein Party man. The Nazi glass manufacturer was not a good advertisement for his cause: the next little town was hard-hit—because its trade had been destroyed by customs barriers imposed by Germany. Maybe I was not so impressed by the poverty of the Bohemian depressed areas as I ought to have been, since I had seen worse in England, but it was unfortunate for my Henlein mentor that the first ragged unemployed family we called upon turned out to be German-speaking Czechs! He was even more unlucky when he pointed out a factory which was derelict—all as a result of Czech government. Unfortunately, I have a habit of asking the same question of at least two persons, and I had already ascertained that this factory had closed down in 1914! The members of parliament for all the places I visited were Germans—which hardly consorts with the lack of “fundamental rights” and “freedom of political opinions.”

There is no reason to elaborate this point any longer. The reader is probably familiar with the niceties of propaganda; in this country the name is commonly regarded as an euphemism for sheer hard lying. If he has any doubts about the treatment of the German minorities, I suggest that he should suspend judgment until he has considered my description of minority conditions in other countries.

But one feature of the case was disturbing. There is a section of British opinion which does not like Hitler, and considers that everything he does is wrong. I do not share

this view. *Hitler's opinions do not* appeal to me, and his methods often appal me, but I have seen too much of modern Germany to condemn all his works. Hitler has inherited an old German failing, and so often does the right thing in the wrong way. On the other side is another British school of thought which believes in making terms with Hitler at any price—so overwhelming is the Communist "menace" that any humiliation is preferable. This, again, is not my opinion. If negotiation with a dictator means doing everything he says, then the hopes of democracy are not particularly bright.

One section opposes the other automatically, irrespective of the merits of the case—this is one of the weaknesses of our political system. Thus, when after the seizure of Austria one side demanded a firm pledge to Czechoslovakia, the other school of thought was apparently ready to jettison Czechoslovakia. Politicians who a few weeks earlier had been talking about the sanctity of treaties, now made speeches which might have been interpreted as an open invitation to Hitler to march into Czechoslovakia. The dangerous feature was that they *were* so interpreted, and were represented in the German propaganda "news" as the views of responsible British statesmen.

A section of the British Press was also useful to Hitler and Henlein. There are irresponsible journals of which nobody takes much notice at home or abroad. But I got something of a shock, at the height of the alarming tension in Czechoslovakia, when I picked up the newspaper which supplies my Sunday reading—a responsible and respected journal, worthy of its high repute. It featured an article on Czechoslovakia; an accompanying sketch map was remarkable, for the eastern frontier of Czechoslovakia touched Russia! The impressions of this author were so different from mine that it may clear the reader's ideas if I mention the outstanding features of his article.

"All the minorities in Czechoslovakia," he writes, "—Germans, Slovaks, Magyars, Ruthenes—are discontented at their treatment by the Czechs, and all want to manage their own affairs in their own way, and to speak their own languages."

I have already dealt with this point at some length. The Germans did speak their own language and generally no other. Except for their demand for autonomy or union with Germany, there is nothing barred to them: I have already quoted the Czech arguments against autonomy. It was quite absurd to class the Slovaks as a minority—they were the partners of the Czechs. If they wanted autonomy, they had only to ask for it. Before September, 1938, only one-third of the Slovak members favoured autonomy; the others firmly supported a centralized government. If all wanted self-government, it could not have been refused. In the 1935 elections autonomists in Slovakia polled only 489,641 votes out of an electorate of 1,623,000. To talk about Slovaks wanting to speak their own language is sheer nonsense. They always did: in all their schools, newspapers, books, the Slovak dialect was used. To suggest oppression of the Slovaks when the founder of Czechoslovakia, Dr. Masaryk, was a Slovak, and *when the Prime Minister of the day, Dr. Hodža, was a Slovak*—the reader will agree is somewhat ridiculous. I will return to this point, and to the question of Magyars and Ruthenes, at a later stage.

"The minorities have submitted over twenty petitions to the League of Nations, not one of which has been investigated on the spot, and not one of which has led to any amelioration of grievances."

I recalled one of these petitions. It complained of a Czechoslovak regulation discriminating against the employment of Germans in public works. This did not require investigation, for it was proved in a few minutes that the regulation simply did not exist! I have since inquired about



the other petitions. I find that they were carefully investigated by the successive Minority Committees set up by the Council of the League—which include British representatives—and were turned down without exception on sufficient evidence being given to disprove the complaints. It would have been in the better traditions of British journalism to have mentioned these facts.

“It is true that the Sudeten Deutsch have been promised twenty-two per cent of all government positions, under an agreement dated February 1937, but to-day, more than a year later, it is admitted on all sides that this attempt at conciliation has been a failure.”

If so, whose fault was that? In February 1937, the Germans occupied fourteen per cent of all official positions. Since then the proportion was increased as the co-operation of Germans has made this possible—and as suitable men offered their services. It is interesting to note that among the judicial and scholastic professions the Germans held more than twenty-two per cent of all posts. That is to say, there were not only enough German judges for the German-speaking districts, but there were German judges in Czech districts as well.

“Even Christmas presents for Sudeten Deutsch children from relatives in Germany are not allowed into this region.”

This is, of course, a clumsy propaganda lie, which no cub reporter would swallow. It is a handy annual among the grievances of minorities, but, like bayoneted babies in war-time, disappears before investigation. In Czechoslovakia it was grotesquely false. I bought German newspapers freely in all parts of Czechoslovakia—at a time when practically every *British* newspaper was forbidden in Germany.

“Big new Czech schools are in evidence, but the Government has found no money for the schools of the Sudeten Deutsch. They are four-fifths of the population, but their schools are small and old.”

This is a half-truth far more dangerous than a lie. It is perfectly true that most of the new schools in the Sudeten Deutsch country were Czech—I noticed that myself. But why? Because, prior to 1918, when the Germans were masters there, they provided no schools at all for Czech children! If Czechs wished to learn they had to go to German schools. Naturally the Czechoslovak Government had to redress this injustice—and that is why most (but not all) of the new schools were for Czech children. We have already noted that practically all German children in Czechoslovakia go to German schools.

Since this distinguished author appears to favour the totalitarian States, it is a pity he did not draw a comparison. There are 225,000 Germans living in Italy. They have no schools at all in their own language, which is vigorously repressed. German is not permitted to be used in courts or public affairs: street, place and family names have been Italianized: the spread of German culture is almost impossible, so stern is the official outlook. In fact, if Hitler's complaint that "Germans are unable to secure fundamental human rights or freedom of political opinion and action" referred to the Germans in Italy, few people would disagree with him.

The author of the article then goes on to describe the "deserted factories," and so on. He appears to have been taken on the same tour as I made, except that he believed all he was told by Henlein's agents.

I have no doubt whatsoever that the author was wholly sincere in what he wrote. That he unintentionally misled a body of British readers is unfortunate, but at least he is not alone—every newspaper article which presents one side of the case only, is misleading. It is more serious that statements like those I have quoted were freely used by Henlein's propagandists to prove that "thinking" British opinion is with them.

## V

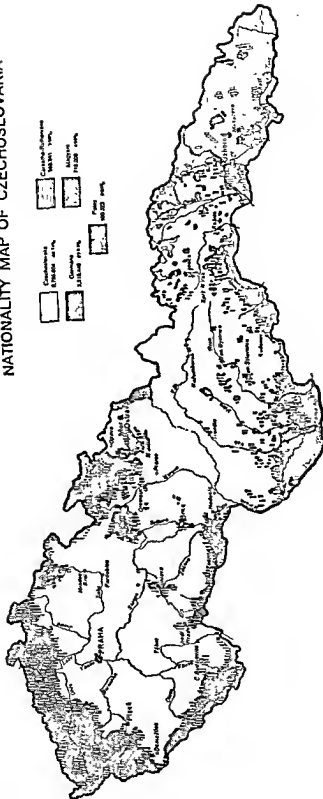
In 1938 events moved with gathering speed. After the seizure of Austria, the chancelleries of Europe were alarmed by reports of the massing of German troops on the Czechoslovakian frontier. By May these reports approached an alarmist phase: Prague daily expected the German air fleet overhead, and part of the Czech army was mobilized, the frontier defences manned. At the last moment the Germans denied that there had been any massing of troops at all!

An increasing flood of propaganda was now loosed, in scope and ferocity unequalled in history. The dignified figure of President Benes was signalled out for vituperous abuse. "Incidents" of a familiar pattern occurred daily in the Sudeten districts. Extremist elements, spurred by words and supplied by arms from Germany, began what was in effect guerrilla warfare with the Czech police and frontier posts. When any of the guerrillas were killed, the incident was represented as another outbreak of Czech "terrorism." Actually, Czech discipline and restraint were remarkable—it is significant that the Czech casualties were far higher than those of the Germans.

In such an unhealthy atmosphere the British government made a significant move—it sent Lord Runciman as an "unofficial mediator" between the two sides. For a moment it appeared that he would be successful. The Czechs made in all four offers to the Sudetens, each more liberal than the last. The final offer, indeed, gave Henlein practically the whole of his eight points. Negotiations on this basis were opened and for a brief moment Europe hoped again.

When Hitler addressed the Nuremberg Congress on September 12th 1938, the whole world listened. After announcing the new might of Germany, and gigantic fortifications in the west, Hitler indulged in the customary

# NATIONALITY MAP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA



abuse of Czechoslovakia; then he announced that he was "not willing to look on without aid while Germans in Czechoslovakia were persecuted." Unless this ceased, he declared, "serious results will ensue." As the only man who could stop this "persecution"—at a word, by stopping the provocation—was Hitler, Europe feared the worst.

Then we were given a sample of the new diplomacy on which the precarious edifice of European peace is to be built. Given practically all they wanted, the Sudetens demanded much more. And, on the pretext of another "incident" in which lives were lost—an incident directly following Hitler's provocative speech—they broke off negotiations and threw themselves openly into the arms of Hitler.

The situation was unprecedented in history. Thousands of Sudetens, fearful of the outbreak of armed conflict in their valleys, fled to Germany. Young Sudetens passed into Germany to form a "free corps." Armed and trained, they carried out "irregular" invasions of Czechoslovakia from German soil.

The restraint of the Czechs under unparalleled provocation deserves and will receive the praise of history. By this time the question was at least in the open—it was revealed not as a question between Benes and Henlein, but between Benes and Hitler. From August 1938 onwards, if not earlier, Henlein was a mere pawn in the terrible game. And in the middle of August Hitler had prepared to back his demands by mobilizing 1,500,000 troops. Foreign ambassadors were assured that the vast army exercises had no political significance, but this "diplomatic" assurance was given the credence it deserved. The democracies may be gullible, but they are not simpletons.

The last fortnight of September was reminiscent of 1914, except that the pace was much more furious. Again Czechoslovakia manned her frontiers, while vast German

armies prepared for overwhelming invasion. The Sudeten Germans were almost forgotten—the affair had now become a matter of national pride.

In the meantime, on September 7th, a significant leading article in *The Times* had suggested for the first time the cession of the Sudeten districts. Although it was promptly denied that this was the policy of the British Government, acute observers were profoundly uneasy. It is now known that Lord Runciman had come to the conclusion that such a state of tension had been reached that settlement on terms of autonomy was impossible.

"Responsibility for the final break must, in my opinion, rest upon the shoulders of Herr Henlein and Herr Frank and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging extreme and unconstitutional action," he reported. . . . "Directly and indirectly, the connection between the chief Sudeten leaders and the Government of the Reich had become the dominant factor in the situation; the dispute was no longer an internal one."

It was, in fact, quite clear—as Dr. Goebbels has since admitted—that no concessions would have halted the situation. An anxious Europe saw war stalking from the near horizon. Sides were hastily formed, with much confusion. Poland prepared an ultimatum for the surrender of Teschen; Hungary demanded a drastic frontier revision. France and Russia re-declared the validity of their treaties with Czechoslovakia. Roumania and Yugoslavia, while not anxious to go to war with Germany, promised the utmost fulfilment of their liabilities if Hungary moved. Italy was silent, probably most anxious of all states of Europe.

Disaster seemed inevitable when Mr. Chamberlain made his dramatic gesture (according to Paris, at French suggestion) and flew to see Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15th. He found the situation even more urgent than he had supposed, and was convinced that Hitler had

determined that "the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination and of 'returning,' if they wished, to the Reich. . . . If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he said, he would assist them to do so, *and he declared categorically that rather than wait he would be prepared to risk a world war.*"

The phrase I have italicized is the key to the situation. Mr. Chamberlain, convinced that Hitler was about to invade Czechoslovakia, came home to consult his colleagues and the French Government. The French commitments to Czechoslovakia were infinitely stronger than the British, and the internal condition of the country was such that they were desperately anxious to avoid war. Proposals for "self-determination" in the Sudeten areas were placed before the Czech Government.

The Czechs saw the ground fall away beneath their feet in a night. To date they had had the moral backing of England, the firm alliance of France and Russia. The Czechs naturally protested. Without being consulted they were to hand over to Germany their richest areas. They appealed to their Arbitration Treaty with Germany—which had been specifically re-affirmed by General Goering "on his honour" only six months previously. The British and French Governments persisted; no choice was left to the Czechs, who could scarcely fight Germany alone. "Under intolerable pressure" they agreed to the dismemberment of their country.

Mr. Chamberlain flew back to Germany with the good news. But at Godesberg he found himself facing another development of the new diplomacy. He expected to discuss with Hitler convenient ways and means of carrying out the agreed proposals. Instead, he was presented with an ultimatum far wider in its scope. The Germans demanded to occupy at once the Sudeten provinces—the mask of self-determination was already dropped: such

an occupation would have left the Czechs at Hitler's mercy, for their "Maginot Line" would be in his hands. Further negotiations would be useless.

Naturally, Mr. Chamberlain declined to accept the ultimatum. Indeed, he "bitterly reproached" Hitler for his action. He could not press the Czechs to accept the new conditions, nor could he advise them to delay further their mobilization. At this stage there was no more hesitation—at least the situation was clarified. France prepared to honour her pledges and mobilized her army. It was announced that England would support France: air raid precautions were organized and improvised: the fleet mobilized. The situation was exactly equivalent to the last days of July 1914.

The German army was ready to march, but at the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth minute it was halted. President Roosevelt sent a powerful appeal to Hitler: Mussolini moved swiftly and decisively—no one doubted that he was intensely anxious to avert a war from which Italy could gain nothing, even if she chose the winning side. In one of the most dramatic moments the House of Commons ever witnessed, Mr. Chamberlain interrupted his recital of the events which were about to plunge Europe into war: there was fresh news—Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier and Chamberlain would meet at Munich on the morrow.

Each of the statesmen was mobbed by cheering crowds when he returned to his own country. For war was averted: a compromise had been reached—which, although it gave Hitler practically everything his Godesberg ultimatum demanded, did obtain a few concessions as to time and method. These at least were something—the first of their kind. The peoples of Europe did not worry over the rest: they had almost forgotten the root cause of the problem, and were only concerned with its effects. A great wave of relief swept over Europe. Only in Czechoslovakia was



there no enthusiasm. "The Czechoslovakian Government, after having considered the decisions of the conference in Munich, taken without it and against it, finds no other means but to accept, and has nothing to add." No more poignant official communiqué was ever penned.

On October 1st, German troops marched into the Sudetenland, and within a week the "predominantly German" districts were occupied. The final frontier was to be arranged by an international commission nominated by the four Great Powers. The Germans claimed that the Czech census of 1930 included thousands of Czech officials and troops in the Sudeten areas, and demanded the 1910 census as the basis of demarcation—although at this time there were thousands of German (i.e. Austrian) officials and troops in the same areas. Further, the 1910 census was conducted on a basis of speech, not nationality—it a Czech spoke German, he was classed as German. All Jews were entered as Germans. A famous British journalist, resident in Bohemia at the time, could speak German but not Czech—so appeared in the census as German! The net result of the adoption of the 1910 census as the basis of the new "ethnic" frontier was that Germany claimed and received considerably more than even the Godesberg demands! Districts containing 99 per cent of Czechs were handed over to Germany.

(It will be noted that there was no pretence at implementing the morally sound doctrine of self-determination; no plebiscites were held. Nearly three million Germans were added to the Reich, but with them went nearly 800,000 Czechs. Further, among the three million Germans were some hundreds of thousands who had shown that they preferred democratic Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany.)

I have summarized the drama of the autumn of 1938 very briefly, but it deserves a far deeper study. Yet it scarcely falls within the limits of this book, wide though

they are. As we have seen, the fate of Czechoslovakia was an incident in the revival of the old game of power politics. The basis of the problem was lost in the fury of wild emotions. Statesmen who had proclaimed the sanctity of treaties and the common interests of democracies forgot their high sentiments in the overwhelming desire to avoid the horrors of war. It is easy to blame, but no one would envy their responsibility.

After acclamation, there came days of reaction, when Europe realized the great price it had paid for peace. There is a tendency to-day to blame Mr. Chamberlain—some of the people who cheered him when he brought peace now complain that the price was too high. There is a legitimate criticism that, Hitler once halted, more time should have been demanded for an orderly handing-over of the Sudeten areas, with a minimum of economic and physical distress. But, apart from this point, it is difficult to see what else Mr. Chamberlain could have done. Every day makes it clearer that his choice may scarcely have concerned the Sudetens at all. The crisis revealed military unpreparedness in England, and unsuspected weakness in France; the attitude of Russia may have been loyal, but quite evidently was not trusted by the Western Powers—she was not consulted during the vital negotiations. If either at Berchtesgarden or Munich, Mr. Chamberlain had to decide whether he would lead the British Empire into a war which it might easily lose, it is obvious that he had no choice at all.

## VI

Before we pass on to the final act in the Czech tragedy, it is advisable to take another glance at the non-Czech provinces of the state. The fall of Czechoslovakia was yet another illustration of the old truth that the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest part.

Within its rim of mountains Bohemia is a land of low hills and broad valleys. Slovakia, on the other hand, is almost entirely mountainous. In the north the Carpathians reach their highest peaks in the Tatra group. With no bigger gap than a single valley, the Little Tatras run parallel with their big brothers, even the juniors topping 6,000 feet. Further south, the mountains are less severe and imposing, but the plain is not reached until the Hungarian frontier. The Slovak people are taciturn and slow of thought, but *they are virile and intelligent: their peasant costumes are a delight, rivalling the colourful displays of Hungary.*

If you were to accept without investigation the suggestions of German and Hungarian propagandists, you would get the impression that Slovakia was a land moaning under the Czech yoke. This is absurd. We have seen that Bohemia, after its centuries of independence, passed under Austrian rule, while Slovakia was under Hungary. I shall describe in the Hungarian chapter the nature of the Hungarian rule. There was little persecution or physical oppression, but the Slovaks were definitely treated as an inferior race, and the educational system was grossly inadequate. The Czechs, on the other hand, were allowed some political rights, and in their own districts education was reasonably organized. They gained in efficiency, too, by contact and competition with Germans—for efficiency is not a national Slav trait. Consequently, when the new Czechoslovakia was formed, apart from their numerical preponderance it was only natural that the Czechs should carry a large share of the burden of administration, since their facilities for education, commerce, and political experience had been so much greater. Because the Scottish educational system was, until recent years, superior to that of England, Scotsmen occupy far more than their proportionate share in the Civil Service or other professions dependent upon competitive examination.

This does not mean that the Czechs ruled Slovakia—far from it. I have already pointed out that Masaryk<sup>1</sup> and Hodza were Slovaks. At the moment of crisis the Czechoslovak ministers in London and Paris were both Slovaks.

At the time of the crisis, only one-third of the Slovaks demanded the autonomy promised to them by Masaryk at Pittsburg, U.S.A., where he laid the foundations of the new Czechoslovak state during the War. They could have had autonomy any time they persuaded the other two-thirds to agree with them. After the seizure of the Sudetenland, however, the demand for autonomy grew—and was actually encouraged by the Czechs. In a night Slovakia became an autonomous province of Czechoslovakia. It was an astute move on the part of the Prague Government. The Hungarians were fiercely demanding revision of their frontiers—and most of their claims concerned Slovak territory. The new Slovakia, it should be noted, was loyal to the federal Czechoslovak state, and suggestions that the Slovaks should be incorporated in Poland or Hungary were fiercely resisted. The new government had a strong Catholic basis, and the despair of the hour impelled some authoritarian usages. But the government never had a chance to settle down—was never allowed to settle down. Its role was already cast, probably without its knowledge.

## VII

Certainly there was no demand in Ruthenia for return to Hungary. Here was quite a different problem from that of Slovakia. The Ruthenes are neither Czechs nor Slovaks, but are distant relatives—both descendants from the same Slav stock, as French and Italians are from Latin. They are blood brothers of the Ukrainians, of whom there are

<sup>1</sup> Actually, Masaryk was even better fitted by birth to be the creator of the new Czechoslovakia. He was the son of a Slovak father and a Czech mother, and was born in Moravia. The population of Moravia, by the way, is Czech.

forty millions in U.S.S.R. and three millions in Poland.<sup>1</sup> They were assigned to Czechoslovakia because a poverty-stricken people of 600,000 could not possibly exist by itself, because union with the Ukraine was geographically impossible, and because there was no reason on earth why they should be handed over to Poland. Most important to the Powers at Paris, Ruthenia formed a strategic link between Czechoslovakia and Roumania.

In his American negotiations, Masaryk met Ruthene representatives and agreed that Ruthenia should be granted a modified autonomy. This self-government was delayed until October 1937, and the delay gave ample fodder to foreign propagandists. Yet the difficulties were immense, as I saw for myself. If educational opportunities in Slovakia were poor, in Ruthenia they simply did not exist. The Ruthenes were not oppressed, but simply neglected. Their standard of life was appallingly low—easily the lowest in Central Europe. They did not merely know poverty—they lived on the edge of starvation. Even to-day, although I was assured by the peasants that conditions had greatly improved, I was appalled at what I saw. I lived for days in timber cottages on a diet of maize bread and potatoes, with milk and an occasional egg. The low mentality of the people was pathetic. Hungarian officers told me that in the pre-War days Ruthene recruits were so unintelligent that they did not know their right from their left: the difficulty was surmounted by sticking a wisp of hay in one boot, straw in another, and giving the command: "Hay turn! Straw turn!" Immediately after the War the Ruthenes were starving, and the American Red Cross rushed out supplies of food. In one valley the people were given slabs of chocolate: they did not know what they were, or what to do with them: eventually they dissolved them in water and painted the outsides of their

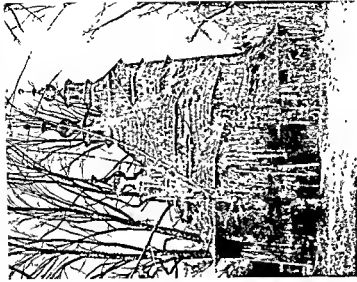
<sup>1</sup> See map on page 122.



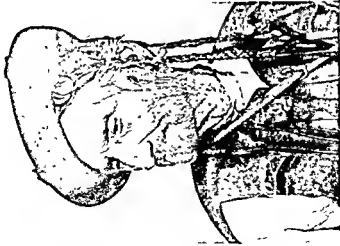
USTI (AUSSIG),  
 an industrial centre in the Sudeten Deutsch country  
 (Above)



BRATISLAVA,  
 Czechoslovakia's port on the Danube  
 (Below)



RUTHENE WOODEN CHURCH



SLOVAK HIGHLANDER

timber shacks with them! These stories—and they are an indictment of a thousand years of Hungarian rule—sound incredible, but are true.

You do not expect a high standard of judgment and intelligence from illiterate feudal serfs, newly liberated—especially as the Ruthene peasant had an unfortunate tendency to drown his sorrows in a villainous home-distilled spirit. Nevertheless, there is no cause for despair in Ruthenia. In the immediate post-War years, the Prague Government devoted no less than seventy per cent of the tax receipts from Ruthenia to education, and the policy has paid. The Ruthene children of to-day cannot be compared with their parents: a new generation of young men and women is passing through Czech and Slovak universities; limited autonomy at last began to function, Czech officials being replaced by Ruthenes, and in another generation the Ruthenes would have controlled the local government of Ruthenia.

I heard many complaints as I passed along the beautiful but pathetic valleys of Ruthenia. In hard times it is quite customary to blame the government—we do it in our own country. There were complaints about poor agricultural prices, and low rates of wages paid by the Jews: although the greater part of the development bill has been paid by Bohemia and Slovakia, the Ruthene peasant does not understand that schools and new roads cost a lot of money, and that self government implies self-support as well. These are passing complaints, without depth. It was significant that I heard not a solitary sigh for a return of the "good old days." The only loss by separation from Hungary is to the casual labourers who used to descend to the Hungarian plain to work at harvest time. For some years after the War these people were hard hit, but now the more active development of the lumber industry is compensating.



I found my greatest hope in the children of Ruthenia: the young men have a vigorous and virile outlook, and a surprising knowledge of affairs. The older generation is not interested.

"I know nothing of these things," said an old forester to whom I talked of Central European affairs. "I don't understand them. I only understand trees."

But he *did* understand trees. The churches in the Ruthene villages are entirely constructed of timber, without so much as an iron nail—designed and erected by men who could not read or write. If you and I, with all our education, set to work with no other tool than an axe, we could not produce things of beauty like these. There must be a submerged intelligence and culture in the Ruthene mind.

There is certainly faith. Bohemia takes its religion casually, Slovakia is devout, but Ruthenia is fervent. I tramped with the Ruthenes on a pilgrimage: for three days we walked over mountain paths, and mine were the only feet which were shod. I was deeply moved by what I saw, and heard, and felt. Here was a simple faith which is almost impossible in our complicated western world.<sup>1</sup>

#### VIII

Mr. Lloyd George on a famous occasion confessed in Parliament that he had never heard of Teschen, but it has caused a good deal of trouble.

So far back as the ninth century the Duchy of Teschen (in the south-eastern corner of Silesia) was the subject of dispute between Bohemian and Polish rulers. Its population was mixed, and although only 850 square miles in extent it is very rich in minerals. In the seventeenth century it came under Austrian rule, and long before the end of the War both Czechs and Poles laid claim to the ancient duchy. They agreed to settle the dispute amicably,

<sup>1</sup> The mutilation of Ruthenia is considered in the Hungarian chapter.

but in January 1919 Poland "jumped a claim" by electing members of parliament from Teschen. The Czechs promptly marched in, and for a year there was serious tension. It was at this period that Mr. Lloyd George made his confession seized upon by opponents—and especially by revisionist propagandists—as a proof that the statesmen at Paris were ignorant of the geography of the frontiers they were settling. The charge was fantastic. Mr. Lloyd George had an adequate staff to advise him on details like Teschen. Even a Prime Minister cannot be expected to know everything.

Eventually Czechs and Poles were persuaded to divide the territory—the town of Teschen itself was actually cut in two by the frontier. The incident rankled, however, and its effects proved to be far beyond its original importance. Relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia have never been as cordial as they ought to be, and the Poles have continually reverted to the settlement. In Teschen and the small adjoining strip of Silesia allocated to Czechoslovakia were some 80,000 Poles, but these formed only fifteen per cent of the population. Compared with the bigger issues like the Polish Corridor and the Sudeten Deutsch, this seemed a senseless prolongation of a quarrel over a comparatively trifling cause. It would appear that Poland did not want to be too friendly with Czechoslovakia. Trouble between Germany and Czechoslovakia had been foreseen for many years, and Poland did not want to be involved. There were cynics who declared that Poland was waiting for this conflict, and would then demand a slice of Czechoslovakia as the price of her support or neutrality. Yet Poland was allied to Roumania, which country was closely bound to Czechoslovakia. It was all very confusing.

The cynics were right. At the height of the Sudeten crisis, Poland pressed an ultimatum on Prague; the Czecho-

slovak Government, apparently abandoned by its allies, could scarcely resist, and Polish troops marched into Teschen—occupying not merely the Polish strip, but Czech districts beyond. It is quite clear that Poland's claim to Teschen was far stronger than Germany's claim to the Sudeten country. Nevertheless, the moment and manner of her action aroused deep resentment abroad—it savoured of kicking a beaten man while he was down.

Incidentally, the fall of Teschen provided a new bone of contention between Poland and Germany. Advancing rapidly, Polish troops occupied Bohomin, one of the most important railway junctions of central Europe. To-day a considerable part of the German traffic from Slovakia and Hungary must pass over a section of Polish railway, or be artificially diverted at great extra cost. Bohomin may not achieve the dignity of one of Europe's danger spots, but it is a source of irritation.

## IX

And what of the future of Czechoslovakia?

Berchtesgaden and Munich left the Czechs in a state of dumb amaze. There was a natural reaction against the democratic powers; we may talk about dictators whose word is worthless, but the bond between Czechoslovakia and France was the firmest in Europe. And now it had broken at the first strain! There was widespread disillusion and resentment. The Czechs argued that it was utterly unfair that the democratic Great Powers should support them up to the critical moment and then desert them. They would have been better off without that support, it appeared, since then they must have made earlier—and better—terms with Hitler.

The democratic government resigned: with it President Benes, whose dignified restraint under unprecedented provocation ensures his niche in history—one untoward

word from him, and the hounds of war could not have been restrained. A new government of the right was set up, its frank object being to make the best possible arrangement with Germany. Slovakia and Ruthenia were promptly allocated a substantial measure of responsible autonomy.

At first sight the new situation appeared impossible. The complicated and efficient economic system of the country was shattered. Main line railways were cut by protrusions of new German territory. The armament works of Pilsen were brought within range of German field guns. Prague was only 27 miles from the German outposts, and the bottle-neck about Brno was only 40 miles across. If the new frontiers had been specially devised to make Czechoslovakia militarily indefensible, they could scarcely have been better drawn.

As the weeks passed, I noticed a great change in the demeanour of my Czech friends—a change I expected. This people is too virile to throw up its hands because it has received a serious blow. Their attitude was a brave one: "Well, the past is past. Now we must begin again."

Both Herr Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain expressed the view after Munich that a prosperous future was possible to Czechoslovakia. They were right. In spite of the grievous blow it had sustained, Czechoslovakia's resources and energy were such that she could have survived economically and politically. All she needed was assistance in making a new start. Unfortunately—nay, disastrously—this was not forthcoming.

At Munich all the powers had agreed to guarantee the frontiers of the new Czechoslovakia as soon as they were finally settled. The guarantee was soon and conveniently forgotten. The British government did make a gift and a loan—but it was amazing to note the opposition this suggestion aroused. Sincere and generous statesmen, who until a few weeks previously had been backing Czecho-

slovakia, were now opposed to aid since indirectly we should be helping Hitler. They may now claim that they were right, but if full support had been given to Czechoslovakia, the events of March, 1939, would never have taken place.

After a short respite to make certain that no support for Czechoslovakia was likely to be forthcoming, Germany developed an intense internal campaign in the stricken state. Special rights were claimed for the 300,000 Germans still left in the rump of Czechoslovakia, and these were given their instructions to act as superior beings, even at the expense of provoking disorder. It was demanded that Czechoslovakia should enforce the Nuremberg laws against the Jews, should accept a military alliance and common foreign policy with Germany, and should surrender a proportion of its gold reserve. In other words, Czechoslovakia was to become a satellite state.

The Czechs resisted. Powerless and unsupported as they were, they gave way only on minor matters, always postponing further concessions. By February 1939, the Nazis were indignant at the slow "progress" in Czechoslovakia, and hinted that if the process of alignment with Germany were not accelerated, "certain measures" would be necessary. One word of support from outside, and the situation might have been faced, but Europe was no longer interested in Czechoslovakia. Actually, the ship was still sound, but it appeared to be sinking. Not only the rats, but some of the crew, prepared to leave.

We have seen that Slovakia is a mountainous country inhabited by a peasant people. As in the Balkans, their leaders were professional politicians—most of whom had better educated at Vienna or Budapest. To say that many

The <sup>de</sup> were under foreign influence is to put it mildly. Benes, <sup>the</sup> first Prime Minister of the newly-autonomist provocation, was arrested on a charge of accepting bribes

from Hungary, he was not brought to trial "owing to Hungarian objections".)

It is not easy for an Englishman or an American to understand the mentality of these men. He has never known but one allegiance, and could never acknowledge any other. Picture a Slovak, born a subject of Austria-Hungary: he becomes a citizen of the new Czechoslovakia, is discontented, and wants events to move quickly: he turns from his cousins, the Czechs, to his older friends.

It is unnecessary to relate in detail the events of March 1939. Slovak leaders planned a complete secession from Czechoslovakia. Already they had the complete autonomy some of them had demanded—only common matters like foreign affairs and defence were left in the hands of the Czech-Slovak-Ruthene parliament at Prague. But they were not satisfied.

The president of the republic acted promptly. The secession of Slovakia meant the death of the entire state—that was certain. Slovak leaders were arrested, and Hlinka guards disarmed. The action of the German minority was significant—they took the lead in organizing demonstrations against Prague. The next step was inevitable. A number of Slovaks appealed to Hitler for protection. They got it.

President Hacha was summoned to Berlin to discuss the situation. He was prepared to offer almost capitulatory terms—but while he was on his way, the Germans invaded his country. Resistance was useless: in September 1938, Czechoslovakia had powerful allies: in March 1939 she had none. Within two days German troops were parading in Prague, where the people could do no more than hiss them. "Thus died Czechoslovakia," wrote an eye-witness: but he was wrong.

Even to-day, many weeks later, the full meaning of the occupation is not quite clear—and I have been unable to

secure permission to go and find out for myself. In effect, the Czech provinces of Bohemia have been annexed, while Slovakia "enjoys" some sort of independence under German "protection." A Czech cabinet still functions in Prague, but its functions are those of our county councils. A considerable German army garrisons the land—and the soldiers complain that continuous service in an "enemy" country is unnerving.

Germany's economic gains are considerable. The very active industries included the Skoda arms factories, the Bata shoe works, and important glass, leather, cement and other establishments. Among the mines were iron ore, manganese, lead, silver and zinc.

From the military point of view the advantages were greater. At Munich the formidable Czech army was neutralized: now it was eliminated, and part of the debit became a credit, as the vast stocks of first-class armaments fell to German hands. An awkward salient, pointing at the heart of Germany, was also eradicated.

To-day there is little news from Prague. The Czechs are to be treated as an inferior race—above the Jews, certainly, but well below the Germans. Young men are conscripted for labour service, even in Germany. The standard of living has already fallen. Many factories have closed—they were akin to German industries, and their competition is not allowed. If the Czechs flung up their hands in despair, few could blame them—no one in the Western world has the right to blame them.

But my information is that their virile courage is not subdued. They are not chastened by disaster, but await the day when it may be repaired. Austria found the Czechs indigestible a generation ago: and history does indeed repeat itself.

Speculation into the future is not helpful. If Germany forces a war, and is defeated, then Czechoslovakia will

re-emerge. (And, in the course of the war, we shall hear quite a lot of the Czechs.) If methods of peace are to prevail, we have to wait for a change of heart in the German leaders—or a change of leaders: there is no enthusiasm among the German people over the conquest of Czechoslovakia. One thing is certain: that when the time comes for discussing Europe's Danger Spots in an atmosphere of peace, Czechoslovakia will be one of the first for consideration. Indeed, justice for Czechoslovakia is surely an elementary condition for any form of general settlement. Then, as we have said, statesmen will have a unique second chance, for the problem in principle is the one we have outlined—the problem of 1919. If I attain life's normal span of years, I am confident that I shall see Czechoslovakia on the map of Europe again, as she so richly deserves.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PROBLEMS OF HUNGARY

Except for its last two sections, this chapter was written in 1938—that is to say, before the northern Hungarian frontier was advanced at the expense of Czechoslovakia. I have deliberately left it as first written—except for an occasional change of tense, where an anticipation has been fulfilled. The principles involved are unchanged, nor has the original problem been finally solved to the satisfaction of either party. The net effect has been to raise the tension about the Hungarian frontiers, and consideration of the original Czechoslovak borderland is essential to the understanding of the kindred difficulties of the Roumanian-Yugoslav frontiers.

#### I

**I**F only by virtue of their position, the Danger Spots of Central Europe are the most dangerous of them all. Ever since the War, we have known of the troubles of Hungary: if there is an international institute of propaganda, it ought to present a diploma to the Hungarian entrusted with the task of placing Hungary's grievances before the world.

Hungary to-day is a small country, about the same size as England. Except for hills in the north and west, the greater part of the country consists of one vast plain. Here roam herds of long-horned cattle and half-wild horses, tended by cowboys in picturesque attire—there were cowboys in Hungary long before America was discovered. In the sluggish streams are water mills, of precisely the same

pattern as have been used for a thousand years—most of them owned, it is interesting to note, by millers of German descent. In spite of scenic monotony, the Hungarian plain is of vast interest: in the spring it is green and pleasant, but by the autumn the plain is parched and dusty. Tiny particles of sand ascend to the air to form a back for a natural mirror, and I have seen in Hungary as in the Moroccan desert the *Fata Morgana*, the mirage, of indescribable beauty.

Except for the capital, the towns of Hungary are comparatively unimportant. Yet Budapest is one of the most beautiful cities in the world: two cities really—the ancient city of Buda on the right bank of the Danube, the modern city of Pest on the left. Pest is all commerce and modernity, but Buda holds the peace of history, with monuments of Hungary's thousand-year story.

Yet the greatest interest of Hungary is in its people. Budapest of course is up to date, but many of the country districts wisely cling to traditional costumes, gaily embroidered. A Hungarian village green on a Sunday evening is like a scene from a comic opera: gypsies are playing traditional dances in their own eerie style, and hundreds of men, women and children are dancing. The green is a blaze of colour, for not a drab Western costume is to be seen. Here are the joyous costumes of Hungary—brilliant reds, blues, greens and yellow, beautifully embroidered, flowing over a multitude of petticoats. Nor do the men betray the scene, for their attire is the most brilliant in Europe.

The character of the people appeals to the British temperament. It has been said that you do not know what hospitality is until you have been to Hungary. Twice I have wandered about its broad acres, overwhelmed with the kindness of complete strangers. When I arrived in a village, there was no question of seeking an inn—the inhabitants

almost fought for the honour of entertaining me. The fertile fields assure that there is no hunger in Hungary, even in the most modest households. After the infectious gaiety of the Sunday evening dance I would have sworn that here was a people without a care in the world. Then I would glance at the lintel of the door, where was affixed a notice, "Nem, Nem, soha!"—"No, no, never!" We must understand what this means before we can approach the problems of Hungary.

Who are these Hungarians, crowded in their plain between German and Slav masses? They, together with the Finns and Estonians, are a race apart from the remainder of ethnic Europe. The early history of the Magyars is in doubt, but it is reasonably certain that they emanated from Central Asia. Maybe they found their way to Central Europe with the Huns; certain it is that they were doughty warriors, then as now famous for their horsemanship. In the tenth century they settled in what is Hungary to-day, and although they raided sporadically and made temporary conquests of neighbouring territories, the Hungarian plain became their permanent home.

For 2 thousand years the Hungarian kingdom survived, but with many vicissitudes. At one time the greater part of Hungary fell to the Turks, and later formed a union with Austria. This had mixed results, and the gain in security was at first balanced by loss of liberty—so much so that in 1848 Kossuth was impelled to fight for the independence of Hungary. Although this was not achieved, the dual empire system was created, with Austria and Hungary as equal partners—in theory, at least.

Now it is important to realize that a change of frontier to-day is infinitely more complicated than it was a century ago. Had the principle of ethnic frontiers been tended by the Napoleonic Wars, the problem of their boys in Hungary would have been comparatively simple. To the Slavs

day, with the complications of communications and economics, any considerable change of frontier means an upheaval, larger or smaller. The point is that during the century of material progress Austria-Hungary had been organized as one economic whole. Railways, roads, the flow of trade, customs barriers—everything was duly planned, so that some wit remarked that if the Austro-Hungarian Empire had not existed it would have had to be invented.



THE DISMEMBERMENT OF HUNGARY

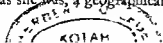
The Hungarian share of the Empire was a territory of 325,000 square kilometres, with a population of over 20,000,000. The principal frontier was the "natural" boundary of the Carpathians, a mountainous semi-circular enclosure. In the south-west, Hungary dominion spread over Croatia, to reach the Adriatic Sea at Fiume. Here then was a country ruled by the Hungarians, but of whose population only 10,000,000—fifty per cent—were Hungarian. To the north of the Hungarian plain were 2,000,000

Slovaks with 500,000 Ruthenes; to the east were 3,000,000 Roumanians, and to the south 3,000,000 Serbs and Croats. In addition, there were 2,000,000 Germans scattered about Hungary. Many of these regions inhabited by minorities had been under Hungarian rule for hundreds of years.

Nevertheless, when Hungary found herself on the losing side in 1918, it was certain that the dismemberment of the ancient kingdom was inevitable. President Wilson's Tenth Point read: "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be afforded the first opportunity of autonomous development." There would be few people in this country who would quarrel with this principle. Since one of the most persistent and reasonable pleas by the defeated Powers is based on the Fourteen Points—that they laid down their arms on this basis, and then were cheated because they were not applied—our problem is to examine the Hungarian claim that the Tenth Point was hopelessly perverted in its application.

The drafters of the peace treaties were under no delusions—they knew very well that the frontiers they suggested would leave two or three million Magyars outside Hungary. The problem was intensely difficult. Hungary, as we have seen, is a vast plain almost surrounded by a circle of mountains. The Magyars are people of the plain, and their preponderance ceased abruptly at the approach of the mountains. Thus, if a true ethnic Hungary were created, it would consist of the entire plain, right up to the mouths of the mountain valleys. But this would make life impossible for the mountain people. Here are two parallel mountain valleys: they can only trade by bringing their trade down to the plain. If the plain were in foreign hands, then the mountaineers might be ruined—even starve.

There seemed to be only two possibilities. Hungary could be left as she was, a geographical and economic unit



—but including millions of other nationalities to which freedom had been promised; the other—the one adopted—was to allow the new States a small fringe of plain so as to allow communications between the mountain valleys. This fringe is the area of dispute, for it is largely occupied by Magyars.

Certainly in its immediate post-War years Hungary was in no condition to protest against any terms the Allies cared to offer. In the aftermath of confusion the Communists seized power. The notorious Bela Kun and his "Lenin-boys" terrorized Hungary, which experienced months of murder and chaos. The White counter-revolution, which followed, was no more gentle in its methods, and it was an exhausted Hungary which was compelled to sign the Treaty of Trianon without discussion.

The terms certainly implemented the Tenth Point—from the point of view of the subject races. Slovakia and Ruthenia were to join hands with Bohemia and Moravia to form the new Czechoslovakia. Transylvania went to Roumania, and Croatia and other southern provinces to Yugoslavia. Even Austria—one of the defeated Powers—was allotted a small slice of Hungary, in the province of Burgenland. Altogether Hungary lost three-quarters of her territory and one half of her population.

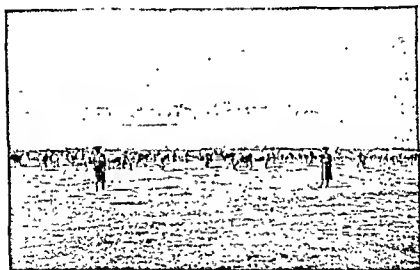
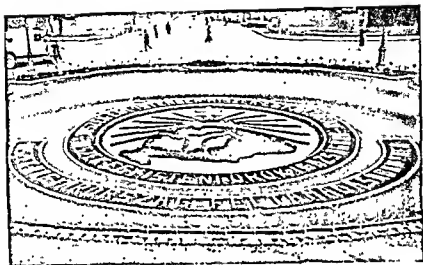
For the first years after the War the position was unwillingly accepted. The troubles for Hungary were overwhelming. The disorders of successive "red" and "white" terrors left the country weak, and the plunge of the currency impoverished the land. Trade was impossible, for the old provinces were now incorporated in new States whose first act was to erect insuperable tariff barriers.

Economic distress combined with national pride to prompt the growing demand that the Treaty of Trianon must be drastically revised. It needed no propaganda in Hungary: as soon as men had recovered from the shock of

inter-necine war, they rubbed their eyes as they beheld the disintegration of their ancient frontiers. The humblest peasant backed the propagandists of Budapest when they sought foreign recognition of Hungary's claims to justice. This is only natural; if we had lost the War and the British Empire had been taken from us, we too would have longed for its return. Our task at the moment is not to consider Hungary's sentimental aspirations, but the justice of her claims and their importance to the peace of the world.

It was, of course, quite legitimate for Hungary to embark upon a campaign of propaganda towards the revision of the treaties: indeed, her method is greatly to be preferred to those of other Powers, depending largely upon force. The campaign was cleverly conducted, but in my opinion its sponsors made one vital error. As any publicity expert will confirm, there comes a point when propaganda recoils upon itself. The Hungarian propaganda was overdone. Whereas five years ago sympathy for Hungary was very pronounced in this country—over 200 Members of Parliament signed a memorial favouring treaty revision—it is probable that this sympathy has receded to-day. The directors of propaganda failed to perceive the moment when the character of the publicity should have been changed: and, of course, Hungary's cause has not been well served by her friends, Germany and Italy.

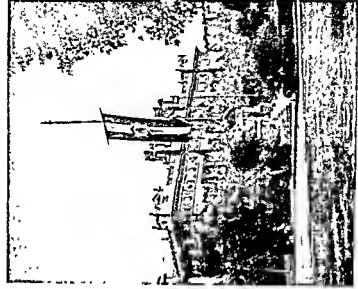
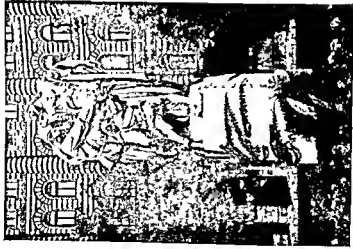
The Hungarian claim has not lacked for capable sponsors. One of the most influential is Lord Rothermere, who at one time was almost idolized in Hungary—there was even a popular suggestion that he might be invited to become its king! His powerful newspapers flung themselves into the Hungarian cause. Unfortunately for Hungary, his intervention revealed another of the principles of publicity: his newspapers naturally presented only one side of the case, and the British public is not so easily beguiled. Further,



(Above) Gardens of Budapest show a map of dismembered Hungary .

(Below) *Fata morgana* on the Hungarian plain





From 1871 to 1918 the statue of Strasbourg in Paris was veiled  
 Today in Budapest the flag flies at half-mast, and statues mourn the lost provinces

every extravagant presentation of the revisionist argument provoked equally extravagant opposition.

More powerful than official propaganda, maybe, was the influence of the Magyars themselves. It was a wise decision to persuade people to come to Hungary: tours were organized at low cost, and in one year the number of British visitors to Hungary increased from 400 to 3,000. They were given a royal welcome, with official receptions. Nevertheless, the real influential propaganda came from the people—friendly, intelligent and hospitable, with a wavelength of thought akin to our own, with a high opinion of England which is very gratifying. There can be few visitors to Hungary who have not come away with amicable impressions.

No one could fail to be impressed, too, by the unanimity of the people on the subject of treaty revision. The Hungarian you talk with may be a Fascist or a Communist, but his outlook on frontiers is the same. Everywhere is seen the eternal slogan "Nem, nem, soha." "No, no, never." "No, no, never will I consent to the degradation of my country." The children are taught in school that they must work for the recovery of the lost provinces of Hungary—the most common feature of a schoolroom is a map showing Hungary before and after the War. The dismembered map is everywhere: in Budapest you find it even in a public square, worked out in flowers.

I remember once dining with a Hungarian family. The grace, when translated, startled me:

"I believe in one God, I believe in one Fatherland;  
I believe in one divine hour coming.  
I believe in the resurrection of Hungary. Amen."

Such a feeling is quite natural, and is particularly appreciated by British visitors, who always esteem loyalty. But because you like a people, it does not follow that they

are right. The warmth of Hungarian hospitality impels friendly ideas, but warps detached judgment. Too many public men from England went to Hungary, were royally entertained, and seriously adopted the Hungarian viewpoint—without taking the trouble to stray over the frontier and appreciate the viewpoint of Hungary's neighbours. This is fatal. Hungary definitely has a case for treaty revision, but the surrounding States equally definitely have a counter-claim. We have seen by now that there are two sides to every one of these danger problems of Europe: that is why they are dangerous.

Let us consider the Hungarian case. It is claimed that Hungary has had an undisturbed history of a thousand years. This is not quite true: there has been a Hungary for 1,000 years, but it has had many vicissitudes, and for long periods has been a subject State. Further, historical argument is not always logical: even if the Hungarians had held their subject races under their sway for 1,000 years, it does not follow that it is right to continue. Moral ideas have changed considerably in the last century, and the principle of self determination is generally held by enlightened people.

The next argument is more forcible—that the pre-W. Hungary was a geographic and economic unit, and that its break-up has caused ruin to thousands, and that the simple trading system has become impossibly complicated. There is a strong basis of fact behind this argument. The Hungarian railway system naturally converged on Budapest. Not only are the outlying lines inadequate for the new states, but communal lines in Hungary proper are hopelessly confused by the railway frontiers. There are Hungarian towns twenty or thirty miles apart; yet if a man wishes to travel by rail, to avoid crossing foreign frontiers he must go to Budapest and come back on another line, a total distance of two or three hundred miles.

Details of the frontier demarcation have certainly led to incessant trouble. In some cases a town is in one country, its railway station in another. The waterworks of one Hungarian town were in Czechoslovakia. At one point there are mines on one side of the frontier, but the workers' cottages are on the other. There are innumerable instances where the frontier cuts a farm in two, and theoretically the farmer has to carry his passport every time he goes to milk his cows. These are petty things, but dangerous irritants, and those who have studied propaganda will know that they lose nothing in the telling as they are passed from lip to lip across the countryside.

Far more serious is the dislocation of trade. Instead of the economic unit of Austria-Hungary, we now have five independent states, all tariff-ridden. Hungary had agricultural products and Czechoslovakia had manufactures, but the two countries for years preferred to stare at each other rather than to exchange their surpluses. It is quite true that thousands of people have suffered privation and ruin because of the Treaty of Trianon. Yet this must have been foreseen, and an acceptance of the Fourteen Points automatically involved an acceptance of the inevitable dislocation of commerce. The real solution of this difficulty, however, does not lie in the re-creation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but in the removal of the artificial barriers to trade which abound on every hand.

We now approach the most serious of the Hungarian complaints—that the populations were transferred without a plebiscite, against their will, and that they would willingly return to Hungarian rule to-day. Here at once it is necessary to make a very definite distinction between subject races and Magyars. It is quite certain that most or all of the exiled Magyars would welcome re-union with Hungary. It is equally certain that the ex-subject races would *not*. The Czechs had their difficulties in Slovakia and Ruthenia

—but I never met a Slovak or Ruthene who pined for return to Hungary.

It is not generally appreciated that the subject races of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire had themselves decided on autonomy long before the Powers met at Paris to consider terms of peace. The councils were necessarily improvised; and, as they were convened by subject races, had no "legal" standing. But the fight for freedom can only be won by rebels: the greatest patriots in the world's history were often illegal.

At the very moment when Austria-Hungary was submitting to the Allies, but while Germany was still at war, a Slovak National Council had been convened in Bratislava: it voted its independence, proceeded to take over the administration of the province, and joined with Bohemia to form the new Czechoslovak Republic. A day later—October 29th, 1918—another National Council met at Zagreb: delegates represented Croatia—Slavonia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Vojvodina, *and Istria* (the Julian March). The delegates were naturally hurriedly elected, and not all districts were represented because of the confusion of traffic, but it is merely futile to argue that the union of these provinces with Yugoslavia was not by the will of the people. At the same time the Roumanians of Transylvania had invited the Roumanian army to occupy their territory.

It is playing with the question to imagine for one moment that these people wish to return to Hungarian rule: for, unfortunately, their pre-War experience was not quite so happy as it ought to have been. I must confess that my own first impressions entirely favoured Hungary—until I passed beyond its borders. The Hungarian is a gentleman of the old school: you can't help liking him. Yet, even allowing for the exaggerations of propaganda, you cannot avoid feelings of concern when you travel the lands which once were Hungary.

It was Hungary's policy to Magyarize her subject populations. For that matter, the Hungarians to-day are of mixed ancestry, for in the seventeenth century their land was occupied by a medley of races, all of whom were successfully Magyarized, and whose descendants to-day would be highly indignant if told that they were not true Hungarians. (There are several aristocratic Hungarian families of Irish descent!) A mixed population lends itself to such settlement, but a compact national race is another matter. A handful of Slovaks scattered over Hungary would find it more convenient to speak Hungarian and to adopt Hungarian customs, but this did not apply to the Slovaks of Slovakia.

Long before the War this policy of Magyarization was pursued. There was nothing brutal about it—none of the petty atrocities which have disfigured some of the post-War States. A young man who wanted to get on had to adopt Hungarian conditions, for practically all higher education was given only in the Magyar tongue. Even in elementary schools education was often given only in Magyar; sometimes in a generation a district would apparently pass from Slovak to Magyar. Actually, of course, it had only altered its language. To-day there are dozens of remarkably interesting cases where districts are changing back again: the younger generation speaks Slovak exclusively; the people over 30 speak Magyar, and usually Slovak as well. In their youth they were classed as Magyars: to-day they call themselves Slovaks.

Much as I esteem the Hungarian, I cannot claim that he is a born ruler of subject races. The Czechs and Slovaks are own cousins, yet there is a vast difference between their intellect, education, energy and capacity: unhappily, as we have seen, much of the gulf can be traced to the fact that the Czechs spent the years of rapid modern development under Austria, the Slovaks under Hungary. Yet my most serious misgivings were aroused as I journeyed about

Ruthenia. Here was a pitiful story—a peasant people deprived of almost all which comes under the general term “civilization.” Here is a race which was almost completely illiterate; which for dozens of generations lived and worked under conditions akin to feudal serfdom; which never strayed beyond poverty and often verged on starvation—I should class their standard of life as the lowest in peasant Europe. The Czechoslovak Government worked hard in laying the foundations of a new Ruthenia, but would have been the first to admit that this is one of the most backward peoples in Europe. It is not that the Ruthenes are naturally unintelligent, for their brothers in Galicia and the Ukraine are bright enough. Ruthene dullness can only be ascribed to centuries of neglect and repression, and the best friend of Hungary could not hold up Ruthenia as a monument to Magyar rule.

You must picture pre-War Hungary as a land of big estates, governed in semi-feudal style by their seigneurs. To a considerable extent this applies to Hungary to-day, although many thousands of peasants have now been settled in small holdings. It is a common argument from the Anti-Revisionist Powers that whereas they have expropriated the great estates and have parcelled them out to the peasants, in Hungary the old system is still intact. The potentialities of the argument should be treated with reserve.

Unvisited peasant Europe can be unaware of the need for land. Just a few acres of land to grow wheat is the ambition of every peasant. The decisions of the Czechoslovak, Roumanian Governments were hailed with delight by all the great estates were to be expropriated might own more than 750 acres; compensation was paid, and the land was to be divided among the peasants who had worked it.

In Czechoslovakia the scheme worked very fairly. Naturally the landlords protested vehemently: had you and I been landlords, we also would have protested. It was claimed that the compensation was inadequate, and in any case the loss was accentuated by the slump in the value of the crown. The re-division of the land, however, was scientifically arranged, and any mistakes were those due to undue hurry. It is very important to note that Magyar peasants as well as Slovaks received allocations of land. The grumbling came from the unlucky ones, for there was not enough land to go round—half a million peasants in Czechoslovakia were still landless.

In Roumania the grievances of the landlords were even more emphatic. Most of the great estates in Transylvania, taken from Hungary, were owned by Magyars or Germans. They were disappropriated, and very inadequate compensation paid. At the same time Roumanian currency did not merely slump—it collapsed. Consequently the sums received for the land were of trifling value. One of them remarked: "If any man got the value of a pair of shoes for the value of his estate, then he was lucky!" This is exaggerated, but comparisons of figures in many countries of Roumania convinced me that the average payment to the landowners was about five per cent of the actual value of the land. I ought to make it quite clear that Roumanian landowners were just as unlucky as Magyars or Germans.

Our traditional sympathy for the little man ought not to blind us to a realization of the landlord's case. One of these—a Roumanian—put it to me simply and fairly: "If Roumania became a Communist country, then I understand that this would be no place for me. I would throw up my hands and hand over all my worldly goods without squealing. But Roumania is a capitalist country, supposed to be governed by the laws and customs of a capitalist



State. Why then should the greater part of my land be stolen from me for distribution in Communistic fashion?"

His last phrase was not quite correct. In fact, here is the surprising feature of the business. While the Succession States have been dividing up the large estates into peasant strips, Soviet Russia has been abolishing peasant strips, combining hundreds of them into large estates! The fact that they are communally owned and worked does not alter the principle of the change: it is simply an economic question—is it better to work land in tiny fragments or in large self-contained areas? In these days of fierce competition, the answer seems obvious.

Before I wandered extensively over the Balkans, my sympathies were entirely with the peasant proprietor. My sympathies are still with the peasant, but I am not now convinced that he was wise in becoming his own proprietor. I have lived with peasants in most countries of south-western Europe. Most of them farmed their own tiny fields, but some still worked on the "rump" estates of 750 acres still in the hands of the feudal landlords. I would not like to claim that the "free" peasants were happier than those who worked for a master, and their standard of living was certainly lower.

I must not be misunderstood as advocating feudalism. There may be something in Pope's dictum that the best forms of government are those which are best administered. Feudalism survived in Spain, with appalling results. There most of the great landlords looked upon their estates as sources of wealth. They seldom visited them, but left them in charge of an agent, whose job was to get as much out of the estate as he possibly could. Not in all cases did the agent consider the welfare of the peasants, and revolution was inevitable. But in south-eastern Europe the fashion is for landowners to live on their estates: there are excep-

tions of the worst Spanish type, of course, but Magyars are country folk, and are content with only an occasional visit to town. Thus, although a landlord may employ 300 peasants, there is a personal relation between them. Many of them belong to families which have worked on the estate for generations. They are not tied to the estate in any way; the "feudalism" consists of a peculiar interest in the estate, an assumption from birth that they will work for the same family, and some form of communal estate life. It is quite common, for example, for the landlord to be responsible for the feeding of his peasants.

It is a remarkable sight, a flash-back to medieval days, to see a concourse of workers being fed communally. Generally they are fed very well, by peasant standards, as I saw for myself—I recall the amazement of a Magyar magnate when he found me among his peasants. I passed to neighbouring villages, where peasants owned their own fields, and found sparser and more spartan fare.

One peasant explained the two systems to me: "I was happy when I worked for a master, for he was my friend. I am very happy now, for I am my own master, owning my own ground. It makes me feel proud, to walk across my own field, and know that it is mine, and will be my son's after me. My family is able to live, though my fields are not large, and we are proud when we eat our own corn. But I know that there are disadvantages. If bad times come, if I am unable to sell my grain, then I shall be ruined. My old master, if there was no market for the grain, would store it until the market was open again. But I cannot wait—we live on the edge of poverty, and have no reserves. If I do not sell my crop at once, then I cannot pay my debts, and the moneylender will seize my land. Or if I am sick, and cannot till my lands? In the old days my master would look after me until I was well. To-day I would be dependent upon charity—and in our poor

country not much charity is possible. Nor do I want charity—I am proud, because I own my fields.”

It is inadvisable to make sweeping statements about landlords and peasants. Everything depends on their quality. I have met in Hungary landlords who were the protectors of their people: there are others who are only concerned with financial yields, and will turn an estate over to grazing if the price of corn is poor, thereby throwing dozens of men out of work.

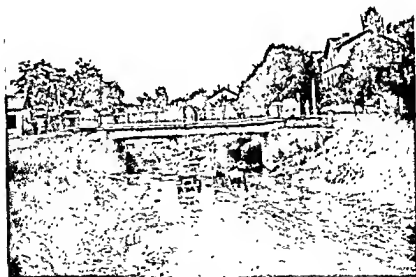
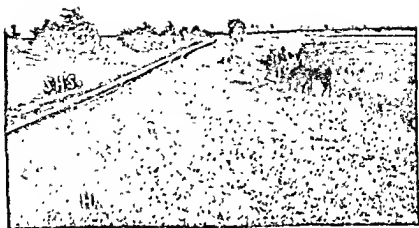
Peasant agricultural methods are necessarily primitive. A man owning ten acres of land cannot afford modern machinery; most of the labour is performed by hand, not machines. True, not all the great landlords have proved themselves receptive to new ideas! Yet there is something in the idea of paternal feudalism which is not unattractive. I remember arguing with a Hungarian magnate who still owned a large estate, and looked after it himself. In his broad fields a dozen men were ploughing, each plough pulled by a pair of steady, sturdy oxen.

“But why not a tractor?” I asked. “These flat fields were made for tractors. One man with a tractor could do the work of a dozen with oxen.”

“I quite agree,” he replied. “And I could afford a tractor. But in Hungary we are very old fashioned. In England you prefer to use a machine which one man can drive, and to throw the other eleven out of work. In Hungary we do not use many machines, but there is work for all.”

The fact that his remark would have been eagerly accepted by the Luddites, and that it evokes vague sympathetic response to-day, is no more than an indication of the vastness of the economic problems of the modern world.

In Czechoslovakia the problems of the peasant proprietor were tackled energetically. Agrarian banks re-



#### IRRITATIONS

- (Above) The frontier between Hungary and Yugoslavia is a country lane—so traffic must pass on the grass verge
- (Below) The frontier is on the bridge: to go from one part of a Hungarian village to another you must go along the river



#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

(Above) Slovak Peasants: their parents called themselves Magyars

(Below) Hust. The Magyars end where the mountains begin

lieved the peasant of his most forbidding menace—the shadow of the moneylender. For it is not enough to break up a big estate and divide the land among the peasants—they must be financed for some years until they have found their feet. Even then, as my friend said, they have no reserves. In Roumania the position is not so happy. Poverty, inefficiency and corruption have restricted Government action, and many of the peasant proprietors are hopelessly in debt, their lands heavily mortgaged. In Yugoslavia the prospect is a little brighter, but both in Roumania and Yugoslavia governments have a habit of passing most beneficent legislation which is never put into effect.

This brief discussion on peasant problems is essential to an understanding of the Hungarian case. One of the favourite arguments of the Anti-Revisionist Powers is that they have given freedom to the peasants, after centuries of Magyar "oppression." We have seen enough to agree that the peasant values his liberty, and is proud in his new ownership, his dream of a lifetime. We have also seen that Magyar semi-feudal "oppression" is not necessarily all that has been represented.

Politically the break-up of the big estates was inevitable, but economically there can be little doubt that it was a retrograde rather than a forward step. Yet if you and I were peasants, we should probably prefer to own our own little strips of land! Economics cannot compete with pride.

## II

The real kernel of the Hungarian problem is not that of the return of her lost provinces, but the question of the 3,000,000 Hungarians living outside the frontiers of Hungary. The actual number of exiled Hungarians is in dispute. The records of Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and Yugoslavia gave a total a little under 2,500,000, but Hungary

claims that there are 3,500,000. The explanation may lie in the process of de-Magyarization to which I have referred. In any case, we are concerned with the principle rather than the details, so can take 3,000,000 as the basis of our argument. Of these, about a half live near the present frontiers, to some extent in compact masses, while over 500,000 form a Magyar "island" in the middle of Roumanian Transylvania. It is essential to consider the problem of the two groups separately.

The first one appears simple enough. Round about the frontiers of Hungary is a fringe of territory, varying in depth, and housing a population of hundreds of thousands of Hungarians. At first sight it seems quite obvious that the frontiers of Hungary should be extended so as to include all compact masses of Magyar contiguous to the present borders. While agreeing that the peace conference at Paris, through its experts, had no venomous designs on Hungary, it is obvious that many decisions must have been influenced by the victor-vanquished motive. The Succession States vigorously claimed more than they expected to get: Hungary was too weak and broken to protest. In the event of dispute, what more natural than that victors should favour their own side? In their determination to leave no subject races under Hungary, did they not plunder too freely? There were cases of towns housing 10,000 Magyars and 1,000 Roumanians being awarded to Roumania.

Quite definitely Hungary has a grievance here. Those of us who can recall the confusion and extravagant hatred of those days—when respectable statesmen were clamouring to hang the Kaiser—will agree that justice in such an atmosphere was difficult if not impossible. It is offering no undue criticism of the men who mapped the new states to suggest that atmosphere and stress combined to rob Hungary of the ethnic frontier which the Fourteen Points had suggested. The proof of the pudding is proverbially

in the digestion, and it is a fact that if the frontiers of Hungary were pushed outwards by ten or twenty miles, some hundreds of *thousands* of Hungarians would again be included in Hungary.

(Let us insist again at this point that a perfect ethnic frontier between Hungary and her neighbours is quite impossible. Any line drawn must leave hundreds of thousands of Hungarians outside Hungary, and include thousands of other nationalities within Hungary. Even to-day ten per cent of the population of the present Hungary is non-Magyar.)

The Hungarians complain that no plebiscites were held—although, so far as I can see, none were promised. They point to the examples in Schleswig-Holstein and Silesia. The first is not a true type, for it was far removed from the scene of strife, and a plebiscite in an atmosphere of comparative calm was possible and achieved. In Silesia it was not, and the result was not especially satisfactory, as we have seen. Nevertheless, it might have been more satisfactory to have held plebiscites in the disputed areas along the Hungarian frontiers; had this been done and the results honoured, then the frontiers of Hungary would have been wider than to-day. Indeed, it would be possible to give a reasonable idea of how the line would have run. For—and this is rather important—it was quite well known when the Treaty of Trianon was drawn up, that two or three millions of Hungarians were left outside of Hungary, many of them in districts adjacent to the frontier. That is to say, the frontier line was settled on the basis of other than ethnic considerations.

For this reason, and because this frontier can serve as typical of others in Europe, I propose to examine the Hungarian boundaries in more detail than hitherto. We will go round the frontier district by district, to see where the Hungarian blocks of population exist, and what would be the effect of transferring their territory to Hungary. (It



is perhaps advisable to recall that this examination refers to the conditions of 1938, before the first partition of Czechoslovakia.)

We need not halt at the Burgenland, the small strip of Hungary ceded to Austria—numbered 1 in my sketch map. The population is overwhelmingly German, and it is quite certain that the question of its return will never be raised by Hungary.



In Czechoslovakia, however, we strike one of the thorniest points of our problem. There were something like 800,000 Magyars in Czechoslovakia, of whom nearly seven-eighths were found in Slovakia. About half of these lived in districts contiguous to the Hungarian frontier, the remainder being scattered further "inland."

The southern frontier of Slovakia was determined quite frankly by geographical rather than ethnic considerations. The Danube suggested a "natural" frontier, and the line

continued eastwards on a basis of easy communications—for Slovakia. Beginning from the west, we find a district about Bratislava predominantly Slovak. It is true that Bratislava—the old Pozsony—has played a great part in Hungarian history. It was at one time the capital of the country, when the Turks were in Budapest, and more than one king of Hungary was crowned in its cathedral. It was here that Maria Theresa called the ranks of Hungary to her aid: the Magyars rallied loyally, but the idea of a woman ruler was obnoxious to them. Consequently, Maria Theresa was proclaimed *king* of Hungary at Pozsony—you may still see her signature there, *Maria Rex*. Thus the sentimental affection of the Hungarians for the city can be well understood. Nevertheless, even the Hungarians admit that Bratislava and its district has no Magyar majority—there are plenty of Magyars there, but they are hopelessly outnumbered by Slovaks. In this district you will find plenty of examples of the phenomenon I quoted—of Magyarized Slovaks who have now become Slovaks again.

A little to the east of Bratislava, however, lies a region which is more than predominantly Magyar—it is almost entirely Magyar. It is interesting to note that part of this district (numbered 2 on the sketch map), was left in Hungary in the original draft of the peace treaty. Then it was argued that it was a purely agricultural district, dependent upon Bratislava for its prosperity, and was thus allocated to Czechoslovakia. At this point, I think, the detached British reader has his first misgivings.

Even if the district were originally dependent economically on Bratislava, it is not so certain that Bratislava depended upon the district. Is there any reason why its economic structure should not have been rebuilt around another town—Komarno, for example. Komarno is a purely Magyar town—also of sentimental interest to Hungary, for it was the birthplace of Maurus Jokai. It

was awarded, with its hinterland, to Slovakia because there the Vah enters the Danube—the Vah being the principal river of Slovakia. Certainly the importance of Komarno to its Slovakian background must not be under-estimated: the river port has been developed, and now carries a considerable traffic.

Economics are *very* important, argued the statesmen at Paris, and can over-ride ethnic claims. Yet at least they are scarcely consistent, for Poland's claims to Danzig are considerably stronger than the Slovak claims to Komarno. In district 2 the ruling was given in favour of economics. If the Hungarian frontier had been pushed to the north an average of twenty miles, some 300,000 Magyars would be restored to Hungary, carrying with them only about 20,000 Slovaks. Yet if this were done, Slovakian trade would receive a serious blow, for access to the Danube would be confined to ten or fifteen miles about Bratislava. I leave the reader to decide the just action, warning him that this is the simplest case around the Hungarian frontiers.

After a short interval where the Slovaks definitely occupy territory right up to the original frontier, we approach another area housing a large Magyar population—district 3. Here, except in certain districts, the proportion of Slovaks is somewhat higher. Nevertheless, the real problem here is again one of communications. Except for the extreme south, Slovakia is almost entirely mountainous. Consequently, some of its principal lines of communication lie along the southern plain, from west to east. Thus if the frontier were pushed north even an average of twenty miles, the principal railways and roads would be cut, and the mountainous country further north would make it extremely difficult to replace them. The reader must decide whether this is an adequate reason for detaching Magyars from their homeland, but he will at least agree that it is understandable that the Slovaks should try to hold on to

their present territory. A rectification of the frontier on purely ethnic lines would restore some 120,000 Magyars to their homeland, but there was justice in the Slovak claim that in doing so the economic communications of southern Slovakia would be paralysed.

District 4 presents the same problem. We are now in Ruthenia, a primitive country we have already met. The predominant race in this province is Ruthenian, a Ukrainian tribe. They are a simple mountain folk, shepherds and foresters. Their valleys run from north to south, and in many cases the sole communication between valleys is via the narrow plain, the valley of the Tisa. This valley is predominantly inhabited by Magyars. Again a move north of the frontier is quite possible on ethnic grounds, another 80,000 Magyars rejoining Hungary. The objections are (a) the economic life of Ruthenia would be completely paralysed—a people already living in deadly poverty would find life even more difficult, with their market towns and only railways in foreign hands. (There are nearly 600,000 Ruthenes, and their economic welfare must not be overlooked in argument. If I own the only road to a station, am I justified in closing it, and preventing seven other people from reaching it with their trade?); (b) the second reason is perhaps more forcible. Ruthenia was allocated to Czechoslovakia on grounds of strategy as well as kinship. It was realized in Paris that the newly created or enlarged States would have to face their problems together, and it was decided that there must be direct communication between Czechoslovakia and Roumania. If the frontier were pushed to the north, that communication would be destroyed. (It is true that in wartime it would not be very valuable, since the railway would immediately come under Hungarian fire.) It will not do to despise the strategic argument. Ethnically and geographically Gibraltar is Spanish: but it isn't, nor is it likely to be.

Summing up, then, a frontier move of an average of twenty miles to the north would bring something like 500,000 Magyars back into Hungary, while "sacrificing" only some 50,000 Slovaks. (There are also German and Jewish minorities, but these are negligible proportionately to the problem.) The remaining 300,000<sup>1</sup> Magyars are hopelessly scattered in enclosures surrounded by Slovaks, or in districts where Slovaks are predominant.

Here, then, was a pretty problem, a quarrel between ethnic and economic considerations. Justice to Hungary meant serious hardship to Czechoslovakia. If conditions were perfect, and customs barriers did not exist, then many of the arguments would lose their force. But if conditions were perfect, then it would not matter very much whether a Magyar lived in Hungary or Czechoslovakia. Yet we have to consider realities, not dreams. The Hungarians clamoured for treaty revision, the Czechoslovaks refused it. Here was a question vastly more complicated than any Alsace-Lorraine.

### III

It is argued that, since revision cannot in any case solve the whole of the Magyar problem, it is unacceptable as a method. With the best will in the world, and sacrificing all economic, defensive and strategic considerations, only about one-half of the exiled Hungarians in Czechoslovakia could be restored to their homeland. The redistribution of the frontier of district 2 only—the communications of Slovakia and Ruthenia being considered paramount in the other cases—would certainly appease the local population, but—so it is argued—would inevitably provoke implacable irritation among the other Magyar minorities. And would Hungary be satisfied? Having achieved a partial success,

<sup>1</sup> These figures, of course, are approximate. It might prove that only 400,000 Magyars could rejoin Hungary, while 400,000 still remained in Czechoslovakia. Details could only be ascertained by district plebiscites; enough is known to indicate the broad outlines of the probable outcome.

she would clamour for more—would never rest until all her co-nationals were re-united. These arguments were potent, and, until the rape of Czechoslovakia, prevented even minor revisions of the frontier—for, by manipulation, at least 100,000 Magyars could have rejoined Hungary *without* cutting the natural lines of communication of Czechoslovakia. It is claimed that this would never have satisfied Hungary.

For myself, I should have been tempted to try. It would at least have "shown willing," and Czechoslovakia would have gained the respect of the world. Just as important, if Hungary did not respond to such a gesture, she would have alienated world sympathy.

Recognizing the real and serious difficulties of revision in districts 3 and 4, I would like to have seen the Czechs make a tentative offer of part of district 2. Near Bratislava an arm of the Danube branches off, and pursues a course ten or twelve miles to the north, eventually rejoining the parent river via the Vah at Komarno. This island between the Danube and the Little Danube is almost entirely populated by Magyars. It was originally allocated to Hungary by the peace conference, and it was the only revision along the Czechoslovak frontier which could be effected without serious economic effects.

From every other point of view except that of re-union with their own countrymen, Hungarian grievances in Czechoslovakia were grossly exaggerated. Magyars in Czechoslovakia were persuaded by propaganda that their state was infinitely worse than it was. Actually, except for racial bias, there is no reason in the world why a Magyar should not live happily in Czechoslovakia. It is a well-governed, democratic land, and if I could not live in Britain or Scandinavia, I would have chosen Czechoslovakia as my home from all the other European countries. I cannot expect the Magyar to take so detached an outlook: he cannot

forget that twenty years ago he was ruling Slovakia, regarding the Slovaks as a somewhat inferior race. I have the greatest tolerance for India, for example: I can live quite happily beside Indians: but if the Indians turned on us, beat us, annexed my land and ruled me, then I might not be so happy.

One feature must be insistently recorded—that in Czechoslovakia there was no nauseating record of the petty persecution of Magyar minorities which has disfigured other countries. True, it is probable that Hungary regarded Czechoslovakia as Enemy Number One among the Succession States. This outlook was perhaps impelled by jealousy at Czechoslovakia's progress, or realization that with every bound of prosperity the prospect of revision became more remote. I have wandered often and extensively among the Magyar population of Czechoslovakia. There were complaints, but of the petty and inevitable kind. I did indeed wonder in 1937 whether the problem was about to solve itself. Ten years earlier the Magyars had formed one political party, and had voted as such. In 1937 they had split up, and were to be found in the ranks of local Conservative, Liberal, Labour and Communist parties. In Kosice—Kassa, a town of Magyar traditions—I heard a Magyar nationalist orator vigorously heckled by Magyar Communists. These men were emphatically against any revision in favour of ultra-Conservative Hungary. I do not pretend that they are large in numbers or influence, but ten years ago they could scarcely have existed.

It is now time to pass to the consideration of the Magyar minorities in Roumania. Here the problem is the same, but its embellishments are different.

#### IV

At this stage, it will be recalled, we are considering only the Magyars living in districts immediately adjoining the

Hungarian frontier. Those isolated in Transylvania form a separate problem.

The Roumanians in 1918 claimed the frontier line of the Tisa, considerably west of the present line. This would have been the grossest injustice, and the Roumanian demand was refused. The present frontier represents the inevitable compromise. Once again economic considerations prevailed over ethnic claims, however, and some 400,000 Magyars are to be found immediately contiguous to the Hungarian frontier. In the north and centre, for example, are the towns of Satu Mare and Oradea Mare (these are their present Roumanian names). They are both important railways junctions, considered vital to the communications of Roumania.

The "ribbon" of Magyars is not continuous. From the north it runs as far as Oradea Mare, to a depth of twenty to thirty miles. In this district (no. 5), live some 250,000 Magyars, 30,000 Germans, and 120,000 Roumanians. While the attitude of the Germans could only be settled by direct plebiscite, it seems certain from their history that they would accept its verdict loyally.

The considerable ethnic majority of the Magyars cannot be doubted, however misleading rival statistics may prove. The problem presented to the peacemakers was a modified version of that of Slovakia—that important north to south communications ran through the disputed areas, which were therefore awarded to Roumania. Speaking generally, the Magyars end where the hills begin. Roumania was awarded a stretch of plain for her communications, and a strategic strip to safeguard them. Passing the validity of this argument, nevertheless, it is not so strong as in the case of Slovakia. There the communications are the only ones possible, so forbidding are the mountains to the north. In Roumania it would be expensive, but quite possible, to run new railways east of a revised frontier.



It is argued, too, that revision would sever districts from their natural market towns. This is quite true, but the principle had little influence on the actual demarcation of the frontier from the Hungarian point of view. There are plenty of examples of Hungarian towns cut off from their natural countryside. Incidentally, it is surprising how quickly districts and towns can sometimes recover from economic earthquakes of separation, and how rapidly new relations are made.

District 6 is a small one, and quite unimportant except that it cuts a railway line. It houses 30,000 Magyars and 10,000 Roumanians.

District 7, about Arad, would form an unwieldy salient into Roumanian territory if it were added to Hungary, but Europe knows many geographical slopes far more grotesque. The population consists of about 80,000 Magyars and 20,000 Roumanians. In all cases there are small minorities of Germans and Jews as well.

Thus a revision of the Hungarian-Roumanian frontiers could restore about 350,000 Magyars to Hungary at the expense of 150,000 Roumanians. The Roumanian case is: (a) the ethnic frontier would cut communications vital to our prosperity, and we have no money to build new ones; (b) why should we hand over 150,000 of our own people to the rule of the Magyars? We saw quite enough of their methods before the War.

The quarrel between Hungary and Roumania is a bitter one. That between Hungary and Czechoslovakia was like strife between two intellectuals, with sarcastic wit predominating. Hungary and Roumania are more primitive in the fashion of their quarrel, and the reason is to be found in history. There has always been a tendency in the Balkans to confuse patriotism with hatred of the other country.

If you wander over any part of Roumanian Transylvania,

and talk with the older generation, you cannot but be impressed at the sincerity of their complaints of the old Hungarian regime. They were a repetition of those of Slovakia, but with greater force. The Roumanians were treated as an inferior subject race, and only those who did not resist the process of Magyarization could hope for success. The state schools were entirely Magyar: challenged at the peace conference, the Hungarian delegation was unable to mention a solitary state school where instruction was given in Roumanian (or, for that matter, in Slovak or any other non-Magyar tongue, except German).

The Hungarian case was that their culture was higher than that of their subject nationalities, so that it was her duty to draw them up to her level—which could only be done by Magyarizing them. There were, of course, local Roumanian schools run either by the church or paid for by the peasants direct. As they lived on the edge of poverty, they could scarcely afford to pay out considerable sums for the education of their children. Thus they had to choose between education in Magyar or none at all. Most of them chose none, and in 1914 no less than 78 per cent of the Roumanian population of Transylvania was illiterate. (Even then, it is important to note, the level of culture and education among the Roumanians of Transylvania was higher than that of their brothers in the Old Kingdom of Roumania, so recently under Turkish rule.)

The political system of Hungary resembled that of England before the Reform Bill. Only 6 per cent of the entire population voted, and of the Roumanians only 3.2 per cent had the franchise. Nor could they vote with freedom, for the open ballot had always been favoured in Hungary. It was a brave man in those days who would vote against his feudal landlord!

Roumanian parliamentary representation was a farce. The maximum number of delegates was five—whereas by pro-

portion of population the number should have been 120. The Roumanian Press was maltreated, and frequently suppressed.

(I should emphasize that I am here summarizing the more moderate of the Roumanian complaints. Actually, Magyar Socialist papers were freely suppressed as well by the old regime.)

Roumanian meetings were banned or dispersed, often with violence. Roumanian peasants were exploited, treated almost as feudal serfs. And so the list goes on.

Passing to the districts of Transylvania preponderantly occupied by Magyars, I found another set of complaints—of to-day. The Magyars are facing a complete policy of Roumanization—the minority clauses of the Peace Treaty were largely ignored. Street signs have all been changed from Magyar to Roumanian—and if a letter is addressed in the Magyar style, it may not arrive: the street is “not known.” Roumanian is exclusively used on the railways and post offices, and the policy is being introduced into the state schools. The national cultural activities of the Magyars are repressed—Hungarian songs and dances are strictly forbidden. It is not permitted to import modern Magyar books from Hungary. Magyars are ill-treated by the police merely because they are Magyars. Practically the whole of the civil service is Roumanian; and thousands of Magyars were dismissed. When the great Magyar estates were expropriated, they were almost entirely divided between Roumanian peasants, the claims of the Magyars being ignored.

There is a pathetic similarity between these two sets of complaints. Both have foundation, but are pathetic because they prove the utter lack of tolerance. In one of my first hypothetical problems I warned readers that they must not make the easy answer—that if the two nations would settle down, by tolerance their grievances could be mini-

mized to vanishing point. I have looked in vain for signs of tolerance in Transylvania.

It was obvious to me, as I wandered Transylvania, that while there is a firm basis for many Magyar complaints, the Roumanians also have a point of view. If a minority is to be happy, it must co-operate with the ruling power. The Magyars have never pretended to do this: on the contrary. The political argument is that co-operation would imply satisfaction with their lot, which they will never admit. So they have preferred obstructive methods, putting up with dozens of personal grievances so that Hungary should be able to claim with truth that her exiled sons were unhappy and yearned to return to the fatherland.

(It would be as well to answer one obvious sub-question. Admitting that the Hungarians did not treat their minorities too well before the War, what is the position to-day? There are about 550,000 Germans, 150,000 Slovaks, 80,000 Yugoslavs, and 50,000 other minority nationals inside Hungary. The Germans, by my observation, are quite contented: they rank equal with Magyars. The Slovaks and Yugoslavs complain still of the policy of Magyarization and the repression of their own national cultures. There are still no non-Magyar schools, and a Slovak Press is forbidden. Slovak peasants also point enviously to their cousins over the border who have achieved their life's ambition in the possession of a piece of land. Nevertheless the complaints are petty compared with those of older days. I have seen infinitely worse conditions in many European countries, including those which claim high civilization.)

There are, of course, complaints about the Hungarian political system, but these are not confined to minorities. I once heard a lecture by Count Stephen Bethlen, the famous Hungarian Prime Minister. "Hungary is a thoroughly democratic country," he declared. Ideas of democracy

must differ from ours. In Russia enthusiastic Communists endeavoured to persuade me that the Soviet system was democratic! They were amazed when I argued that however Fascism and Communism might differ on paper, their effect on human life and minds was surprisingly similar.

I am very fond of Hungary, but I could never class it as a democratic country. Open voting is still the rule except in towns, and the electoral methods defy the comprehension of the Western mind. Like Balkan systems, they are designed to ensure that the Government always gets a substantial majority. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to class Hungary as a Fascist country—as yet.

The complaints of the Magyars in Czechoslovakia were much exaggerated: but in Roumania the standard of government and of political life have been much lower—I have referred to this in the appropriate Roumanian section. Corruption and inefficiency on a vast scale have made life in Roumania very difficult. The Roumanian peasant is one of the finest fellows in Europe, but he has been mighty unlucky in his politicians. I have said that I would willingly have lived in Czechoslovakia, but I would firmly decline to live in Roumania, particularly as a member of an unpopular minority. Many of the stories of persecution of Magyar minorities by petty officials are unfortunately true—I have seen enough for myself for conviction. No one in clean-governed Britain can imagine what a hell can be made of life by an oppressive village policeman. And if that policeman who orders you about, demands bribes for the slightest service, forbids everything you want to do—if twenty years ago he was one of your own servants, classed as unintelligent at that, your discomfiture to-day can be imagined. I should hate to be a Magyar in Roumania: I feel that I should become a rebel, and would shout my loudest for reunion with Hungary.

## V

We have still to consider the most important Magyar minority—that isolated group in the middle of Transylvania—but it is more convenient to complete the circuit of the Hungarian frontiers, passing towards and into Yugoslavia.

Just outside the south-eastern corner of Hungary lies one of the most remarkable provinces in Europe—the Banat. The name means “frontier province,” and it is. All other ethnic complications pale beside the social tangle of the Banat. I recall one incredible morning when I rode through a succession of seven villages: they were inhabited by Magyars, Germans, Czechs, Serbs, Roumanians Slovaks—and French! The Tower of Babel was a comparative holiday.

The Banat was settled by the Magyars in the tenth century, but most of them were driven off by Tartar raiders. Four hundred years later, after the Turkish conquest of Serbia, Serbian refugees appeared, but in 1552 the Banat was itself captured by the Turks. Not until 1718 did it recover its freedom, to be attached to the Austrian crown. The desolation of the Turkish regime was appalling. From being one of the most fertile provinces in Europe, it was now almost a desert. Most of its inhabitants had been murdered, starved, or driven into exile.

Maria Theresa, who was responsible for many remarkable schemes of colonization in the Balkans, took in hand the reclamation of the province. From all corners of the Austrian Empire settlers were invited, with special privileges: they came also from Bavaria, the Rhine provinces, and Alsace. Added to the surviving remnants of the original populations, they made up an ethnic medley of a complexity unknown even in the Balkans. The seven



while their neighbours starved. The last change of government hit them hardest of all, for they had gravitated to the market of Budapest, and all their extensive trade was in the Hungarian direction. To-day most of their trade passes artificially into Transylvania, and there have been many difficulties and not a little hardship. Nevertheless, the peasants of the Banat keep on working, and even if not so prosperous as in pre-War days, at least they are better off than their neighbours.

I can imagine the lifted eyebrows of the statesmen at Paris who had to allocate the Banat. Here was a Hungarian province, claimed by Roumania and Yugoslavia. Yet its population figures for its northern section ran:

|                    |    |    |         |
|--------------------|----|----|---------|
| Germans (assorted) | .. | .. | 220,000 |
| Hungarians..       | .. | .. | 140,000 |
| Roumanians         | .. | .. | 130,000 |
| Serbs              | .. | .. | 130,000 |

together with oddments of the other races I have mentioned (some of them by this time partially or wholly Magyarized).

Nor do these peoples live in self-contained districts, but are hopelessly scattered. It is quite a common thing to find four races *and four religions* in a single village. It is interesting to note by the way, the populations of the Banat have always lived at peace with one another. It appears to be easy for small numbers of people to live in peace, but masses make for war.

Actually, purely political considerations led to the division of the Banat, but any other decision would have been equally right or wrong.

It has been argued that a plebiscite would reveal a majority for Hungary—that the Germans would opt for Hungary in a body. Loyal as they were to Roumania and Yugoslavia, I did on my first visit remark a general feeling



among the Germans that their trade would be bettered if they could return to the orbit of Budapest, and that given a perfectly free choice they would vote in its favour. But it is only fair to say that I found no popular demand among the Germans as there was, of course, among the Magyars.

The situation to-day has changed. The Germans of the Banat have been "organized" from Berlin. They are buying up land wherever they can, are very assertive, and local Roumanians complain that they are boycotted—in their own country! It may be to-day that the Banat is no longer a problem between Roumania and Hungary, but between Roumania and Germany.

## VI

The next zone is the last, the reader will be relieved to learn. Just to the west of the Banat is a district called the Backa—numbered 9. It will be seen as a Magyar triangle pushing into northern Yugoslavia. The district was awarded to Yugoslavia because on its northern edge lies the town and neighbourhood of Subotica, which is predominantly Yugoslav. In this area there are about 100,000 Yugoslavs, whereas the Backa houses some 300,000 Magyars—together, of course, with German and other minorities. A further consideration was strategic—with Hungarians occupying the Backa, it was argued, the position of Belgrade was indefensible. Here no serious economic difficulty is involved—it is simply the question that if the Backa were handed to Hungary, 100,000 Yugoslavs would go with it.

Such are the principal problems of the Hungarian frontiers. There are others, of course, but they are minor, and once a principle of revision were adopted would present few difficulties. I repeat that I have dealt with this European irritation at some length not only because of its importance, but to show how complicated the territorial

problems of Europe are. In previous chapters my sketchy treatment may have made them appear simple—such, indeed, was my object. The purpose of this disquisition is to show that, even when a principle has been admitted, its application is extraordinarily complicated.

But not impossible. Before I sum up the Hungarian situation, however, it is necessary to consider the Magyar "island" in Transylvania.

## VII

Transylvania is a lovely land. It forms a plateau, roughly circular: the mountains at its western fringe are modest enough, but the eastern boundary is the great sweep of the Carpathians. Here are valleys of breathless beauty: more than once I have sat in their green depths or on the passes above, almost overcome with sheer emotion at the loveliness about me. Even its name is intriguing, for Transylvania means "beyond the woods."

It is a land of colour. Its medley of races have retained their picturesque costumes, and the drab process of Westernization is happily slow. On any day a Transylvanian village is colourful, and on a Sunday evening the scene rivals the plains of Hungary.

There are unimportant industries and coal-mines, but Transylvania lives up to its name, and is a pastoral land. The wide valleys are fertile, and the mountain slopes offer grazing for millions of sheep. The great landlord has now almost disappeared, exterminated by the expropriation laws; "intellectuals" are comparatively few in a land where a generation ago sixty per cent of the people were illiterate. Transylvania is a peasant land, even if its sons are of many races.

Maybe the limited educational facilities explain the extraordinary survival of superstition in Transylvania. Ideas

which were abandoned centuries ago in Western Europe are still firmly believed. I remember sitting up one night in a Transylvanian village with a wooden beam across the door to bar the entry of blood-sucking vampires—the priest and I were the only people in the village who did not believe in this ancient superstition. I have heard stories of vampires, werewolves, and mandrakes, told by ignorant but sincere peasants with such conviction that I thought my hair would stand on end, and where I had to fight to disbelieve such impossible yet credited stories. Apart from its political interest, Transylvania is a fascinating ethnic study, and the student of ancient folk-lore and survivals will find it unsurpassed in Europe. Scenically its charm is beyond all words but those of a poet. If Roumania were a happier country, and if Transylvania were more accessible, it might easily become one of the show places of Europe.

It was part of the Roman province of Dacia. When the Romans withdrew, they may have left behind a Romanized population; but the next mention of Transylvanian history is of a population of Vlach shepherds. The Magyars overran the district in 1003; little attempt was made to interfere with the indigenous inhabitants, but strong bodies of settlers were sent to guard the Carpathian frontiers. To the south-east were planted the Szeklers, a Magyar tribe: further north were German colonists—they are popularly called Saxons, but most of them appear to have come from the Rhine valley. For 500 years Transylvania was a Hungarian province, though with wide powers of self-government. Then, when the Turks overran Hungary, it became an independent state—and thousands of Hungarians fled thither for refuge. The defeat of the Turks before Vienna in 1685 eventually brought Transylvania under Austria; there were many clashes between the many shades of the population—first, peasants against overlords, irrespective of nationality, then Saxons and Roumanians

against Magyars. In 1868, Transylvania was placed by the Empire under Hungarian rule.

The emergence of a Roumanian state from the Turkish tyranny roused its inevitable repercussions among the Roumanians in Transylvania. Nationalistic aspirations were, however, sternly discouraged by the Roumanian Government—which was allied to Austria-Hungary. Not until the War was it possible for the people of Transylvania to express their own wishes. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled, the Roumanians of Transylvania naturally declared for union with their brothers beyond the Carpathians. The Saxons, in January 1919, agreed to join the new "Great Roumania." This decision was sensible enough. It was quite impossible for them to form a kingdom of their own, scattered as they were, and they were hopelessly isolated from any other considerable branch of their own kin. As we have seen, they have always been loyal to the regime of the day: they are workers and traders, not politicians, and as soon as it became obvious that Transylvania was to be allocated to Roumania, they accepted the situation with excellent grace. The Magyars, naturally, did not.

We have already noted that there are some hundreds of thousands of Magyars in districts adjoining the Hungarian-Transylvanian frontier. Tens of thousands more are scattered in isolated groups all over Transylvania, especially in the towns. But in the east there remains a considerable homogeneous block, occupying substantially the same territory as the original Szekler settlers. The exact limits of this Magyar "island" need not concern us here: according to their drawing, wide or near, they would enclose anything from half a million to three-quarters of a million of Magyars. The indisputable fact is that there is a considerable area of Transylvania which is Magyar—it does not house a mere majority of Magyars, but is almost entirely

Magyar: in places the Magyars form over ninety per cent of the population—a remarkable proportion in so medleyed a land. And this Magyar “island” is separated from Hungary by a wide stretch of territory which is predominantly Roumanian. The problem is indeed that scheduled as D.

It is common in Hungarian propagandist arguments, by the way, to include Germans with Magyars, on the grounds that they would infinitely prefer to return to Magyar rule. This cannot be assumed. A recent representative German assembly took up a reasonable attitude: the Germans were neither the enemies nor friends of the Hungarians. History had decided their fate, and it seemed that they could only return to Hungary by violence, which they declined to consider. If history decided that they should return to Hungary, they would accept its decision, but they would make no move. On the contrary, they declared their complete loyalty to Roumania, which they had joined voluntarily on the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is an eminently sensible point of view, typical of the history of these settlers: its general adoption would aid the appeasement of Europe.

Unfortunately, it cannot be guaranteed that this attitude is permanent. Because the Germans co-operated with Roumania, their treatment has been relatively fair, and their complaints are minor. They have firmly retained their own language and culture for six centuries—have always controlled their own schools. Throughout their history they have maintained a higher standard of life than their neighbours, whatever their nationality. They were as happy as any people in the Balkans—until the rise of Hitler.

Naturally the repercussions of the Nazi creed penetrated the Balkan valleys. At first there was no enthusiasm, but in the last two years racial consciousness has been encouraged—from without. Organizers ~~and~~ <sup>in</sup> Roumania;

"cultural" publications were widely scattered. There *were* legitimate complaints against Roumania, and malcontents seized on them: they formed the nucleus of a Nazi party, hostile to the regime. Their strength has grown. As I have said, for centuries the German communities have been self-controlled so far as local affairs are concerned. To-day some of them are Nazi controlled. A "state within a state" is always dangerous—especially when the interior state is scattered over a wide area. Hitler has made no secret of his interest in these "exiled" Germans. They may be reserved to provide the excuse for another offer of "protection."

We have already studied briefly the position of the Magyars in Roumania. It would be absurd to pretend that they are happy and contented. They have always looked down on the Roumanians as an inferior race, and have treated them accordingly—and now they are ruled by the race they despised. From 1919 onwards they have declined to co-operate with the regime, and have openly clamoured for re-union with Hungary—this latter natural enough. Yet their non-acceptance of the situation necessarily complicates their condition. They are denied their proportion of government posts. "How can we appoint a man to an official job when he is an open enemy of the regime?" ask the Roumanians, pertinently.

Culturally at least they are better off than the Roumanians were under Hungary. The majority of the schools are, however, run by the Church, and paid for by the Magyars direct. It is unfair that a man should pay a State education tax, and then pay a private education tax in addition. But it was also unfair in 1913.

The Magyar Press is as free as any other in Roumania, which at any given moment may not mean very much. Their cultural societies are very active, and their economic situation is at least higher than that of the neighbouring

Roumanians. Nevertheless, I felt exceedingly sorry for the Magyars of Transylvania. Irredentism seldom makes for happiness.

The Magyar woes are aggravated because they are opponents of the regime, and are treated accordingly. I could well understand the complaints of Magyars living under the tyranny of ignorant and corrupt local officials. The local Roumanian peasant suffers also, but it is more galling to the Magyar because he is usually a man of higher intelligence and education—and because he feels that he is being tyrannized by an inferior.

The condition of Roumania I have discussed elsewhere. The present problem is the Magyar "island"—what is to be done about it? To connect it with Hungary by any sort of corridor would involve the handing over to Hungary of an equal number of Roumanians—who would protest just as vociferously as the Magyars demanded. A glance at the map is sufficient to indicate that this solution is simply not practicable.

An autonomous state within Roumania? Extremely difficult—and, in the present atmosphere, quite impossible. It seems that I must abandon the limitation I set in the hypothetical cases and admit that without toleration on both sides *no* solution of the Transylvanian problem is possible.

### VIII

Let us return to the Hungarian frontier districts for a moment, and indulge in a wild flight of fancy. We will assume that in the spring of 1938 the world had suddenly become sane, and had decided to heal its differences. After a suitable interval to allow frayed tempers to cool, level-headed statesmen met at a series of regional conferences. Their task was to work out the economic pacification of Europe. They would do this gradually, so that there should be no violent upset of existing institutions,

but firmly, so that all objects should be achieved. And, of course, each country would take the ten-year oath of friendship and renunciation of force, including propaganda.

After a few years of peace and returning prosperity, Hungary and the Succession States would meet in conference, and in an atmosphere never previously known. Their delegates would talk quite frankly, eschewing diplomatic finesse and all the misunderstandings it involves. First the conference would appreciate the gains of the past few years. Cessation of Hungarian irredentist propaganda had certainly made for happier lives for the Magyar minorities—for the petty oppressions they had suffered had been greatly mitigated. Now an effort was to be made to end all potential sources of strife once and for all.

First the Czechoslovak delegate would make his offer. It had now been proved, he would say, that Hungarians could live side by side happily with Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenes. Nevertheless, in spite of the liberal fulfilment of minority pledges, it was recognized as natural that people should prefer to be governed by their own kin. Thus he was prepared to make an offer to the Hungarian people.

Producing this book, he would turn to the map on page 306. He was authorized to offer to Hungary a portion of district 2, with approximately 200,000 Magyars. The area offered was the island between the Danube and the Little Danube. While admitting that there were many thousands of Magyars north of the Little Danube, he pointed out in all *friendliness* that in pre-War days this district was the scene of intense Magyarization, and that thousands of Magyarized Slovaks were now returning to their true racial language. The Czechoslovak Government, therefore, considered that any question of further revision of the frontier in this district should be postponed for at least ten years, possibly twenty: by this time the true nature of the population would have declared itself.



There would be only minor reservations in the new frontier, easily adjusted between friends. Access to the Danube was, of course, vital to Czechoslovakia, and the short stretch at Bratislava would be insufficient. The Czechoslovak Government therefore suggested special port facilities should be given to them at Komarno.

To the east of Komarno another small stretch of territory could be returned to Hungary—it was not disputed that the population immediately adjoining the frontier was predominantly Magyar, but a little further north the same considerations arose as previously.

He turned next to District 3. Here was a problem of great difficulty. Unquestionably a Magyar population extended up to the hills, but main east-to-west communications lay close to the present frontier. He was advised that it was impossible to reconstruct the railway further north except at prohibitive expense; minor adjustments of the frontier were however possible by abandoning the strategic strip of the plain to Hungary, and some 50,000 Magyars could be restored to Hungary.

In District 4 the same arguments prevailed, but circumstances differed. Again the pushing north of the frontier would cut main communications, but in the eastern portion of the district a wider stretch of plain was available for development. Britain and America were so anxious for peace in Central Europe that they had offered the necessary capital for the rebuilding of the line about fifteen miles to the north—instead of swooping to the south, as it now did, it would run direct from Kosice to Uzhorod and thence to Mukacevo and Hust, the frontier running a few miles south of this line. East of Hust practically no adjustment was possible, for here the tiny plain ceased, and communication from valley to valley must be maintained. However, some 60,000 or 70,000 Magyars would rejoin Hungary. Grand total to date: 320,000.

So far as the others were concerned, nothing possible in the manner of treaty revision could affect them. Most of them were scattered, or living in districts with mixed populations, so that further rectification was impossible. However, if the Hungarians wished, the experiment of gradual transfer of populations could be tried. There were already some 150,000 Slovaks in Hungary, and a further 50,000 might be involved in the new rectifications of frontiers. These could be exchanged, if they so wished, for the 400,000 Magyars who still remained in Czechoslovakia.

The Roumanian delegate then made his offer. District 5 presented little difficulty. Again railway communications would have to be adjusted, but that was only a matter of money. Fortunately the Roumanian hills did not present so difficult an obstacle as those of Slovakia, and a new railway twenty miles east would not be impossible. In any case, a narrow fringe of land on the plain could be left for purposes of communication; the Satu Mare district could revert to Hungary—and with it some 200,000 Magyars. Of course, a lot of detailed consideration would be involved—the best frontier would have to be determined literally village by village, local plebiscites being arranged where necessary. And wherever the line was drawn, considerable numbers of Roumanians would find themselves to the west of it.

District 6 was the little salient about Arad. The same arguments applied, but 30,000 more Magyars would return home. Also District 7, with 80,000 Magyars. Total to date in Roumania: about 310,000.

There remained the vexed problem of the Magyars in Transylvania. Here was a population too vast for the principle of exchange to be possible. In any case, except for those affected by the new frontiers, there were only a few thousand Roumanians in Hungary, and it would be

more convenient to exchange these for the more scattered Magyar population in central Transylvania. The "island" in the east was the problem. There could be no question of the political return of the "island" to Hungary; however, Roumania was adopting the policy of decentralization of government, and with the new county councils the Magyars would have an adequate measure of local rule. They could, of course, enjoy the fullest cultural and political freedom, and have every right of citizenship.

The Yugoslav delegate was very brief. District 9—the Backa triangle—should be transferred to Hungary, the difficulty of the Yugoslavs about Subotica being solved by exchange of population. His contribution would be 300,000 Magyars.

There remained that amazing ethnic medley, the northern Banat. Here Hungary had no direct ethnic claim, since Magyars were a definite minority. However, it might be possible to adjust the frontiers of the northern section so that not only were many thousands of Magyars rejoined to Hungary, but that further possibilities of exchange of population would be available. The full consent of the German population would have to be secured, of course, but it ought to be possible, even by moderate re-drafting, to add 100,000 Magyars to the total.

The grand total of Magyars to be returned to their Fatherland would thus be something like 1,000,000. Perhaps that figure might be made up to 1,500,000 by transfer of population over a suitable period. But there would still remain about 1,500,000 Magyars still outside Hungary. And here was the rub—was Hungary prepared to accept this as a final settlement? Otherwise, obviously, the whole negotiations fell to the ground.

The Hungarian delegate expressed himself as deeply moved by what he had heard. While stressing the justice of his country's claims, he admitted the courage necessary

in statesmen who were prepared to cede even a yard of ground. The actual areas involved were not comparatively large—the suggested changes meant that Hungary's frontier would run on an average about ten miles outside her present borders. He accepted the offer of the Succession States without hesitation—and with it the implications. The dreams of Empire were dead: all the Hungarians wanted was peace. In any case, their hurt national pride would be appeased by the new frontiers and the return of over a million of their fellow-countrymen. He would now go a stage further, and suggest a far-reaching economic alliance of the four contracting parties.

This is the most fantastic dream I ever penned. I never met any statesman in the Succession States who would consider it as anything but a joke. On the other hand, I never met any statesman in the Succession States—except Professor Cuza of Roumania—who would not be prepared to consider minor rectifications of the frontiers *if* he could be convinced that this would provide a final solution of the Hungarian problem. But I never met any Hungarian statesman, or any Hungarian peasant, who would agree that minor rectification of the frontiers could provide a final solution.

#### IX

It is ironical that, having advocated for many years the revision of the peace treaties, I am very unhappy now that revision has come—by force. Had the Sudetens been transferred to Germany years ago, as a move towards the appeasement of Europe, I would have welcomed the move. Had the Hungarian frontiers been rectified, I would have been glad. But it is difficult to believe that a revision by force is likely to make any real contribution to European peace. That of October, 1938, certainly did not.

It was natural that Hungary should advance her claim

at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis—and, as we have seen, Hungary's claims to slices of Czechoslovak territory were ten times stronger than those of Germany. Unlike Germany however, Hungary was unable to back her demands by sufficient force. The real character of the problem was then revealed—the old game of power politics was resumed. Unable to reach a settlement with Czechoslovakia, the Hungarian claim to Ruthenia was referred to Hitler and Mussolini. The only people not consulted, in fact, were the Ruthenes themselves!

The "compromise" worked out was disastrous to Czechoslovakia. The 1910 census was used as a basis, and if it was misleading in the old Austria it was fantastic in Hungary. We have observed the process of Magyarisation in the pre-war decades: we have seen that anybody who wished to get on had to speak Magyar, and was classed as Hungarian, and that Hungarian officials and troops helped to swell the Magyar total. Consequently towns which to-day have only 20 per cent of Hungarian population were torn from Czechoslovakia. With them went a countryside with an almost 100 per cent Slovak or Ruthene population.

The difficulties of communication were entirely ignored—the frontier was pushed to the very fringe of the mountains. Roads and railways were cut in haphazard fashion. Indeed, the railway system of the dismembered Czechoslovakia was a nightmare, for main lines were cut by foreign territory in a dozen places—it was almost impossible to travel for a hundred miles in any direction without crossing German, Hungarian or Polish territory.

The first solution of the Ruthene problem was a masterpiece of inanity. Here the wills of Hitler and Mussolini clashed. Hitler wished Ruthenia to remain part of Czechoslovakia, so that it could still serve as a corridor to Roumania. Mussolini wished to see a common frontier between Poland

and Hungary—a barrier, if a friendly barrier, against German expansion to the south-east. Neither, of course, considered the unfortunate inhabitants—Ruthenia afforded an example of power politics at their best—or worst.

Morally the claim of the Ruthenes to remain within Czechoslovakia could not be disputed. Economically it was possible to state a case for the return of the province to Hungary. In the result, Ruthenia was carved in two, and its political and economic situations are alike impossible. The valley of the Tisa, with the plain as far as Uzhorod, the capital, went to Hungary. Ruthenia became a detached rump of mountain land.

Strategically the victory went to Mussolini. The only communications from rump Czechoslovakia to Roumania lay along the valley of the Tisa—now in Hungarian hands. Yet the settlement satisfied nobody. Czechs and Slovaks were disgusted in that large Slovak and Ruthene areas had been handed over to Hungary against the wishes of their inhabitants. The Hungarians were disappointed because they had not obtained the whole of Ruthenia. The Germans saw that their much-desired corridor to Roumania was cut. The Poles were angry because there was still an autonomous Ruthenia within Czechoslovakia—an absurd example which encouraged autonomist demands within the Polish Ukraine! The feelings of the Ruthenes themselves may be imagined—the configuration of their valleys was such that they were never prosperous, and now they must face the sheerest poverty: they have been treated with less consideration than a herd of cattle. Alas for the second of President Wilson's principles, twenty years after!

Ruthenia supplies an excellent example of how treaty revision should *not* be carried out. The effect of the aftermath of the Czech crisis was that minority problems remained—but the minorities were placed on the other side of the frontier. There were now 800,000 Czechs in Germany

and Poland, and over 600,000 Slovaks and Ruthenes in Hungary. It is significant that for years I have received literature from Hungarian revisionist sources: in November, 1938, I received a bulky parcel of maps, facts, figures and comments from Moravia—the *Czechoslovak* campaign for treaty revision had begun!

It was quite certain that the 1938 solution was not final: it lasted less than six months. While German troops invaded Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, Hungary moved again. This time Germany could scarcely say nay: she wanted Hungary as an ally, so could not grumble at imitative action. So Hungarian troops marched into the rump Ruthenia.

It was an unfortunate moment for Ruthenia. The tiny, uneconomic autonomous state had not yet found its feet. Immediately before the days of crisis there had been grave governmental difficulties—we have seen that foreign influence was not lacking. Suspecting treachery, the Czechs arrested Ruthene leaders and disarmed Ruthene troops. A few days later the Hungarian army crossed the frontier.

According to the Hungarian press, it received a warm welcome. Certainly it did—from two sources: naturally, from the scattered Magyar population, and also from renegade Ruthenes on the look-out for positions under the new authority. Otherwise serious resistance was offered—by irregular bands of ill-armed patriots; and, it is interesting to note, by Ukrainian nationalists from Poland. The end was inevitable, however, and Ruthenia was over-run. Months later there was still guerrilla fighting among the northern mountains. And although Ruthenia was promised autonomy by the Hungarians, there is still no sign of the form this will take, if any.

So Hungary rules Ruthenia again. It is not every country which has a second chance, after a thousand years of neglect.

## X

Hungary must definitely be reckoned among the "live" danger spots of Europe. The recovery of the Hungarian areas—and more—in Czechoslovakia must act as a violent stimulus to the revisionist demands directed against Roumania and Yugoslavia.

Hungary is in danger of becoming a pawn in the international game of power. It is known that Germany wishes to gather Hungary within her "sphere of influence." To date Hungary has regarded Italy as her best friend and potential protector, and it is doubtful if the devotion of Italy to Germany is strong enough to accept a second rebuff.

German policy is reasonably simple. With control of Hungary's vast grain supplies and Roumania's grain and oil, Germany could be almost self-supporting. The point is: what kind of control is envisaged? If it is merely an exchange of Hungarian wheat for German manufactured goods, then there is no cause for excitement—even the difficulties of a "controlled" currency can be overcome by the older method of barter. But there is a strong feeling in Hungary that the control sought by Germany is something more substantial.

The present Hungarian Government is often described as "semi-Fascist." This is not quite accurate—it is merely very nationalist Conservative. No responsible Hungarian would like to see Hungary as a puppet State under German "protection." Already there is alarm because the Nazi-fication of the considerable German minority in Hungary has begun—it appears that the story of the Sudeten Deutsch is to be told all over again.

There are only three possible solutions to Hungary's frontier problems. One is something along the lines of the fantasy I have dreamed, at a moment when Europe has recovered its sanity. Another appears in these days more



fantastic still—the development of an age when nationalism has lost its force, and no one would be concerned if he lived in one country or another. This method is strongly favoured by thoughtful men in the Succession States, for it is realized that the central Danube countries are interdependent economically and geographically—and maybe politically—and that no permanent solution is possible until the creeds of nationalism have lost their force. It is assumed that at this happy stage the Hungarian demand for revision would disappear, but this is doubtful. In any case, it is admitted that the international idea in Central Europe tends to recede rather than to advance, and it seems to me that nothing would help to make it practical politics so much as a voluntary revision, even if on a scale much smaller than that I have suggested. Otherwise the submergence of nationalism is far too remote for safety. Whether the new Utopia developed through M. Herriot's United States of Europe or H. G. Wells's system of self-governing cantons all over Europe, subject to one parliament in main issues, does not seem to matter very much. Either, starting from the troubled state of world affairs to-day, would require so lengthy a period for development that it would be certain to be interrupted by the third solution—war: which is no solution at all.

There is a type of journal which strives for effect by confident recommendations to "Watch Roumania!" "Watch Bulgaria!" These are always right, for within a month they have exhorted their readers to watch pretty nearly everywhere. Maybe they *are* right, for it is folly to allow one publicized danger spot to distract attentions from the others. "Watch Hungary!" is a sensible slogan whatever the state of the European scene. Hungary might set a pretty problem. She has leaned towards the Axis because nowhere else could she find support for her revisionist claims. Suppose Germany, on the Albanian model, decided to absorb her friend Hungary. Is this aggression?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROME-BERLIN AXIS

#### I

THE Rome-Berlin axis is balanced on the Brenner: it has already become overweighted at one end.

After the wars of liberation fought in the middle of the last century, Italy recovered from Austria practically all the Italian-speaking provinces. The exceptions were the districts adjoining the north-east frontier, and the Trentino—then the Southern Tyrol. The strategic frontier in the Trentino was most unfavourable. The Austrians held all the passes and their military roads threatened some of the richest districts of Italy. Further, some 400,000 Italians were still under Austrian rule. Consequently the annexation of the Trentino was one of Italy's war aims, suitably agreed in the pact with Britain and France, which brought Italy into the War.

Apart from the valuable reinforcement, there was every sympathy in this country for Italy's aspirations. Nowhere in the world had there been such interest in her fight for freedom against her ancient enemy, and she fully appreciated the moral and material support she drew from Britain. I doubt if we realized that the allocation of the Trentino to Italy meant that over 200,000 Austrians would now pass under Italian rule. In 1919 we did not trouble very much about the feelings of our enemies—they had asked for what was coming to them.

Italy argued that strategy overruled any ethnic claims. It was essential that her frontiers should march with the

high mountains—that it should be quite impossible for Austria again to threaten Italy by her possession of the passes. Such argument was perfectly legitimate, and was held to be valid. The new Italian frontier repatriated the 400,000 Italians, and brought in 225,000 Austrians with them, as it advanced to the Brenner Pass.

The Brenner is the lowest of the Alpine passes—a mere 4,500 feet above sea level. A dozen times Teutonic raiders have swarmed over it to attack Italy. Its gradients are so moderate that both road and railway pass over it. The neighbouring mountains are stern and forbidding, a natural defence. The Italians set themselves to fortify the Brenner so that no enemy might pass.

The greatest problem was that of the Austrian population—which forms a homogeneous mass immediately adjacent to the frontier. An intense process of Italianization began, of the type I have described in the Julian March section. German schools and newspapers were all closed down; place and street names were altered, and it was unsafe to speak German in a public place. I was once arrested myself for asking a policeman the way to a village, and referring to it by its old Austrian name. (I was released as soon as the policeman found that I was English; he had thought that I was German.)

The defence of the Brenner frontier has legitimately formed a major issue of Italian policy. So long as a weak Austria squatted on the other side, there could be no danger to Italy. The emergence of Hitler changed the situation in a night. It was told quite plainly to keep out—Austria, and Hitler was the dictators: they are accustomed to plain speaking. When Chancellor Dolfuss of Austria was murdered by the Nazis in 1934. For the first time it seemed that Hitler was about to invade Austria.

Mussolini acted promptly, and an army encamped below the Brenner. The results seem to have justified the argument that Germany might have halted in 1914 had she been warned quite clearly of the consequences of invading Belgium—and that it would have paid to have warned her to-day of the consequences of invading Czechoslovakia. In 1934 it was made perfectly plain to Hitler that if he marched into Austria he must fight Mussolini: he was not prepared to fight Mussolini, so he did not march into Austria.

When Hitler did march into Austria in March 1938, Mussolini's army was not at the Brenner. Abyssinia had intervened. Mussolini, with almost all the world against him, desperately needed friends. Hitler was prepared to be his friend—at a price. The price was paid in March 1938, and within twenty-four hours German troops were on the Brenner.

"Mussolini, I shall never forget what you have done for me this day," Hitler telegraphed. With no less than justice, for that day saw one of the keystones of Italian security violently swept away. The neutrality of Austria was just as vital to Italy as that of Belgium to England. When the news of the occupation of Austria came through, a well-known Italian journalist said to me (with great courage, since he used a name which is *tabu* in Italy): "This is our biggest defeat since Caporetto." Mussolini is a realist, and no fool. He could hold the Brenner for ever against a weak Austria, but with the might of Germany on the other side of the pass, its strategic value is worth about fourpence. Mussolini also is not likely to forget what he did for Hitler that day.

Sometimes the least publicized danger spot provides the biggest surprise. In the summer of 1939 a strange campaign opened in the Trentino. Germans who had retained their nationality were given marching orders. Within a period,

apparently, the district is to become purely Italian. Such startling action could only be taken with Hitler's connivance.

We have argued that an exchange of populations could often assist in the pacification of Europe. As we anticipated, the Germans of the Trentino are not so happy about this method of making the racial and strategic frontiers concurrent. They are, indeed, complaining bitterly about the leaders who have "sold" them. But the wider implications are far more interesting—serious students consider them as the most important feature of the troubled situation. If it is proper for Germans to be repatriated from Italy, why not from the Balkan and Baltic states, where they form such a ready excuse for intervention and "protection."

Events move rapidly to-day. A year before the expulsion of the Germans, Nazi newspapers published stories of Nazi oppression in the Trentino, where "Germans are unable to secure fundamental human rights." This slogan tempts the suspicion that the present move is purely tactical—and temporary. Another German slogan reads: "What Germany held is always German"—and this is held to apply to territory once Austrian. Will Hitler be content to remain always on the Brenner? With Trieste only ninety miles away, will he deny himself his ambition of a port on the warm sea? The Rome-Berlin axis may yet split on the Brenner Pass.

## II

When Alsace and Lorraine were rejoined to France by the peace treaty, the popular impression was that of a final curtain to a drama. It was quite wrong. An essential and highly-interesting act is still being played.

There seem to have been only two British opinions on the subject of Alsace-Lorraine. The one—intensely preva-

lent during the War—was a picture of two lost daughters yearning to return to the Motherland. The other—a minority view—claimed that Alsace and Lorraine were essentially German in character. The real truth lay half-way between these extreme opinions.

It has often been represented that Alsace-Lorraine formed one of the causes of the War. This is scarcely true. After 1871 French resentment was strong—naturally, at the loss of provinces which had been French for the last 200 years, to say nothing of the blow to national pride. Gradually passions cooled. The statue of Strasbourg in the Place de la Concorde was still veiled, but by 1914 the position was this—that no French Government could have dared to make war to recover Alsace-Lorraine. Once war was declared, of course, their recovery became a major war aim. They did not provoke war, but they might have prolonged it. That is their danger to-day.

The first impulse in Alsace-Lorraine after 1871 was a vigorous resistance to all German efforts. Naturally this could not be sustained, and after twenty years of struggle the local patriots dropped the idea of re-union with France, and substituted instead the vision of an autonomous state within the German Empire. Had the War been delayed another twenty years, this might indeed have come to pass. But the abortive sweep of the French army into Alsace in 1914 raised hopes which had long been buried. Not that opinion was united—for the position was gravely complicated by the presence of 300,000 German immigrants who had settled in the provinces. Nor did the progress of the War tend to make either France or Germany more popular, torn as was Alsace into two parts by the broad line of devastation and death. Yet November 1918 brought high hopes—visions, indeed, which were too romantic for a practical world.

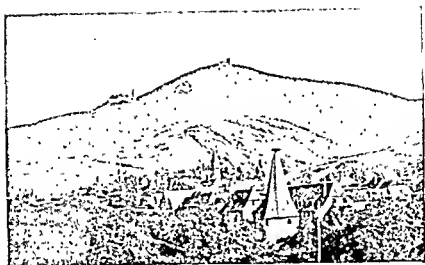
Although the German attempt to assimilate Alsace-

Lorraine between 1871 and 1914 had met with some success, it is significant that when German troops crossed the Rhine they were warned that they were entering "hostile territory." Hundreds of Alsatians and Lorrainers were imprisoned for the duration of the War as suspects, and thousands were exiled to "safer" parts of Germany.

It is significant, too, to note the change of the wording on war memorials. In France the inscription reads: "To the sons of —, who died for France in the World War." The Alsatians fought on both sides; nor were their civilians exempt from its destruction. I noted that a common war memorial epitaph read: "To the sons and daughters of —, victims of the World War."

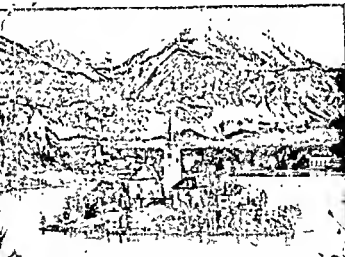
From the first moment of re-union it was obvious that the path of Alsace-Lorraine was to be no arterial road, but a rough and precipitous track. The currency was in a state of chaos: the value of the German marks in the provinces dropped almost to zero, and financial ruin threatened. The legal system was in the utmost confusion. The older people knew something of the French laws existing in 1870; for nearly fifty years they had lived under an entirely different set of German regulations: now they were suddenly flung back to the French code, with the innumerable additions of the Third Republic—a code in many respects inferior to that of the German Empire. The immediate removal of the German administrators of the provinces, though a *natural step*, did not assist in the restoration of stability.

With a great courage and a good deal of generosity the French Government tackled these problems. It shouldered the burden of the depreciated marks until such time as Germany could be compelled to make reparation. The legal chaos was straightened out: the best of France's administrators were seconded to the needs of the recovered Departments. Germanic ideas were treated with the utmost



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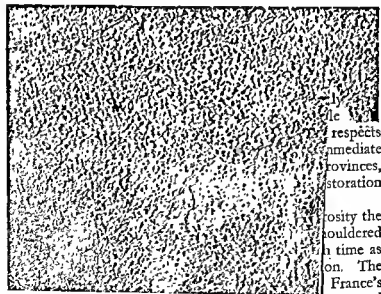


DANGER SPOTS ARE OFTEN PLEASANT PLACES

(Above) Wooded hills of Alsace

A corner of Slovenia, over the border from the Julian March





'IT IS BETTER TO THINK THAN TO FIGHT'

(Above) A French village, 1914

(Below) The same, 1918

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tolerance. Energetic action was taken to heal the War scars, and the Alsatian villages were among the first to be rebuilt. Certainly, since the War, France has deserved well of Alsace-Lorraine.

I have hinted that Alsace and Lorraine are neither French nor German in essential characteristics. The Lorrainer is of French stock, and the French language is fairly widely spoken. (We speak of Alsace-Lorraine, by the way, but only one-fifth of the ancient province of Lorraine was handed to the Germans in 1871.) But Alsace, with the exception of the southern corner (where French influence has permeated through the Belfort Gap) is notably German in its origin and outlook.

The real Alsatians—that is to say, not the German immigrants—on the whole welcomed return to France as they had strongly protested when they were seized by Germany. There were many difficulties, however. In France all connection between Church and State had been severed: in Alsace the hold of the Church is strong and “atheist” France is suspect. The French attitude has been very conciliatory, if not in the true spirit of French logic—the Church in Alsace retains its old powers. Alsace had been organized federally, and looked to Strasbourg rather than to Berlin: the sudden change to Paris was not appreciated. The French have wisely declined to hurry history, and Alsace-Lorraine are still administered separately from France. The educational difficulty was intense. The French have been free from those petty oppressions which have disfigured the Italian record. While Germany forbade the teaching of French, France permits the teaching of German.

It is to be understood that there would be large numbers of Alsatians who would oppose French rule. An autonomous movement was founded. It was backed generally by Germans who had not opted to return to Germany, by

most of the priests, and by people to whom religion meant more than democracy, or who felt the Germanic strain within them. At first the demand was for an autonomous Alsace-Lorraine within the French Republic, but later the programme became frankly separatist. In 1928, some of the leaders of the movement were tried and condemned for sedition, and popular passion was inflamed.

One interesting argument was advanced by the autonomists. With Alsace-Lorraine independent, and linked with Switzerland, Luxembourg and Belgium, France and Germany would be separated by a chain of neutral states. This, it was argued, would be a great benefit to the peace of the world. With these states guaranteed, it would be quite impossible ever for France and Germany to go to war!

The emergence of Hitler has altered the atmosphere in Alsace-Lorraine. There is a strong Communist element in the provinces, which have always held advanced political views—it was no accident that the Marseillaise was first sung in Strasbourg. The autonomists have pondered that if they shake themselves free of France they will only fall into the lap of Hitler. And this many of them are not anxious to do—the priests least of all. Hitler has occasioned many anxious moments for France, but he has helped to solve one of her problems—for ten years ago the tension in Alsace was really serious.

Now Hitler has proclaimed on many occasions that he regards Germany's western frontiers as settled. I may believe him—but I cannot grumble because France does not. "He may offer us peace to-day," say the French, "but read *Mein Kampf*—see what he says about what he is going to do to France!" They are taking no chances, and the vast fortifications of the Maginot Line cover the Lorraine mines and wind their way through the beautiful pine-clad slopes of the Vosges mountains.

I believe that Alsace-Lorraine has returned to its position of 1914. I do not believe that Hitler would ever make war for the purpose of recovering Alsace-Lorraine. On the other hand, if war did break out between France and Germany, Alsace-Lorraine might prolong it, for inevitably



GERMANY'S WAR LOSSES IN EUROPE

its recovery would become one of Germany's war aims. The people themselves are aghast at the possibility that they may become a shuttlecock between France and Germany for all time. "I am neither French nor German; I am Alsatian," proudly proclaimed a youth of Strasbourg to me.

## III

In company with Alsace-Lorraine, the small districts of Eupen and Malmedy must be included among the Danger Spots of Europe. As a cause of war they are most unlikely, but in the war of propaganda they have already played a prominent part. It is undisputed that the population is largely German-speaking, but it is claimed that most of the people are really Walloons in origin, and have been Germanized since 1815. It is indeed certain that they were French-speaking before that date. To-day, however, most of them are worshippers of Adolf Hitler, and the adoration is not always surreptitious.

The basis of the allocation of these two small districts to Belgium was strategic. 1914 had revealed that Liège was at the mercy of a German army. The frontier was moved east at Eupen to occupy an essential part of the German railway system, and at Malmedy to the watershed of the Ardennes, to put a wider strip of difficult country between Liège and Germany. The two districts are too small—the total population is only 60,000—even to occasion a major outbreak, but I would never care to pretend that Germany accepts the present situation indefinitely. Belgium's anxiety to secure her frontier can be appreciated most sympathetically—but to my mind the inclusion of a potentially hostile population is not the best way of safeguarding a frontier. And the rise of Hitler has spoiled Belgium's chance of assimilating the German portion of the population.

The same remark applies in a *modified degree* to northern Schleswig. In 1864, Prussia seized the Danish provinces of Schleswig-Holstein after one of Bismarck's "made" wars. In 1919 it was proposed to hand them back to Denmark, and a plebiscite was held. The southern section voted heavily for Germany, the middle portion was about half-and-half, and the northern half of Schleswig was pre-

ponderantly Danish. Denmark, very wisely, accepted this northern section only, so as to have no cause for future quarrel with Germany. It included a small German minority, which has now become vociferous. It is improbable that any harm to Denmark is intended, but the agitation serves as a constant reminder of German "power." Actually, there are more Danes in Germany than there are Germans in Denmark: both minorities are negligible, and here at least is one case where exchange of population could be carried out without harm to individuals and with permanent gain to both states.

## IV

"Savoy! Nice! Corsica!" shouted the well-drilled Italian deputies in November 1938, thereby adding new zones to the over-loaded danger-map of Europe. The best reply to the new claim was made by the students of Paris, who paraded the streets bearing placards, "We want Vesuvius!"

The county of Savoy was part of the Burgundian kingdom. Later, its counts acquired the neighbouring territory of Piedmont, and their interests tended to stray to the other side of the Alps. The people, however, were of mixed stock, French predominating. In the interminable series of wars and treaties of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French frontiers were gradually extended at the expense of Savoy, but the frontier county did not become French until 1860.

It was the result of a "deal"—and the man who gave the province away was Cavour. At that time Italy was disintegrated, struggling for liberty. In return for French help Cavour promised Savoy and possibly Nice. The French help was small, but the Italians won their war of liberation and handed over the payment without protest—indeed, without demand.

An arrangement of this kind might be considered im-

moral to-day, but it was common enough then. And it was made between realists who knew perfectly well what they were doing. To-day there is no question about the character of the two counties; they house many thousands of Italian stock, but they are overwhelmingly French.

The story of Corsica is far more complicated. Ligurians, Phœnicians, Etruscans, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Goths, Franks, Moors, Tuscans—all these had controlled Corsica before A.D. 828. Then the island became a benefice of the Pope. One gave it to Pisa, another to Spanish Aragon. In the 14th century it fell into the hands of the Genoese. They ruled Corsica by force—they were there to get out of it all they could. Eventually the decrepit Genoese Republic sold the island to France!

Always the Corsicans had chafed under the harsh Genoese rule—for generations the island was in a state of constant insurrection. They objected just as strongly to France. Patriots fought for independence—or for autonomy under the *British* flag. For two years, from 1794, British troops did actually occupy Corsica, until they retired before an expedition sent against the island by a Corsican—Napoleon Bonaparte. His rise to the Emperor's throne was enough to make Corsica French.

No one could doubt the spirit of Corsica to-day—as M. Daladier saw, when his visit allowed them to reply for themselves to the Italian claims. The Corsicans out-do the French in patriotic ardour: they are the backbone of France's professional army. In Great Britain during the War we lost three-quarters of a million dead out of a population of forty-two millions—say, one in fifty. But Corsica lost 40,000 of her sons out of a total population of 280,000—one in seven. Before Italy could realize her ambition, she would have to conquer Corsica: even if there were no France, the Corsicans would resist to the last—and Napoleon was no fluke. They may speak the bastard

dialect of an ancient tribe in northern Italy, but they class themselves very emphatically as French.

It is not possible to take these Italian claims too seriously. Not even Mussolini can really expect France to do so—he himself has never even ventured them. They are part of the new technique of diplomacy. Italy has certain aspirations—maybe well founded and capable of satisfaction—in Jibuti, the Suez Canal, and Tunis. In the “bad old days” they would have been settled by courteous diplomats in top-hats. In more “enlightened” times it is apparently necessary to arouse storms of fury and hate before stating the claims. Yet the rest of the method is ancient enough—to demand about three times as much as you expect to get.

## V

We have now completed, I think, our superficial survey of the Danger Spots of Europe. Their importance must not be judged by the space devoted to them: in some cases I have described a dormant volcano at some length merely because it is almost unknown. On the other hand, I passed over Spain with no more than a mention, because its dangers were always obvious. That is to say, to most people: it is almost amusing now to find people who shouted for Franco contemplating the effect of his victory on British interests. Actually the potential dangers from Spain to-day are small. Neither Franco nor any other Spaniard dare consider the cession of Spanish territory to Germany or Italy. Nor is exhausted Spain likely to make war on France. The only danger from Spain would develop if ever Europe did go to war. During the last war the Spanish coast provided occasional hospitality for *German submarines*. Italy might be tempted in another emergency to make the same demands. She is unlikely to ask for aeroplane bases—since France would naturally retaliate, and the last thing Spain wants is another war. Although Franco has won,



half the people of Spain belong to the other side, and a general war would be their opportunity.

We must now return to the two outstanding Danger Spots. If our primary task were to study the problems which might provoke the next war, we must return in the end to the people who might make it. In spite of the low stock of the League of Nations, Europe is to-day far better equipped with apparatus for conciliation than she was in 1914. If the spark is struck in the Balkans to-day, there is a fire brigade to quench it before it reaches the magazine—provided that no one hinders the firemen. So we return to Germany and Italy.

At one period Mussolini was more strongly suspect in British eyes than Hitler. There is a widespread opinion that there was more than there seemed in the difference of opinion between Chamberlain and Eden—the explanation given scarcely seemed to justify such drastic action. The Man-in-the-Street was convinced that in the early spring of 1938 Mussolini was nearing the end of his tether. It is quite true that his financial difficulties are immense: that his hold on Abyssinia is far from firm: that the difficulties of exploitation have been vastly under-estimated, and the anticipated returns envisaged over-optimistically. And although every Italian child repeats daily that "Mussolini is always right," belief in the new creed is by no means universal. Opinion in Italy is very divided—despite organized mass demonstrations. There is a considerable body which rates Mussolini almost as a god. There is a larger section which supports Mussolini without worshipping him. They appreciate the material things he has accomplished for Italy, and are prepared to condone the methods used. They recognize the advance in the welfare of Italian bodies, and are too near to perceive the inevitable deterioration in one-way-traffic minds. A third and vociferous section pays violent lip-service to Mussolini, but would shout for any-

one else at a suitable moment. There is a very strong if submerged opposition group—far stronger than Mussolini knows, despite his admirably efficient system of internal espionage. It can do little at the moment, but bides its time. Once Mussolini himself was powerless and unknown. But the biggest group of all in Italy simply doesn't care one way or the other: peasants the whole world over don't want to be bothered with politics—they just want to be left alone.

Because of his known difficulties and proved volatility, it was held that Mussolini would seek a diversion in the spring of 1938, and would drag Hitler after him. Such argument was by no means fantastic. Mussolini's courage is unquestioned, and he is quite capable of attacking a man twice as strong as himself. It was strongly rumoured in knowledgeable circles that he was prepared to attack the British fleet when it moved to the Mediterranean during the Abyssinian crisis—though he must have known that disaster was inevitable. If his case were so desperate, study of his life, writings, deeds and speeches supported the supposition that he was a man who would go down fighting—who would take a hundredth chance, and be content with the death of a martyr.

I can only argue that if Mussolini did attack Britain, then indeed he must be desperate. He could make the Mediterranean very uncomfortable for us, but we could make it quite impossible for him. Even if he were master of the central Mediterranean, a stranglehold at either end would choke Italy to death. It has not been the policy of this book to argue in such bellicose fashion, however, but to point out that there is plenty of room in the Mediterranean for both of us.

If it were true that Mussolini had planned a last gamble in 1938, it is reasonable to assume that it is indefinitely postponed—not because of the Anglo-Italian talks which are

proceeding as I write, but because of Hitler's seizure of Austria. No one knows better than Mussolini precisely what that means, and the mutual congratulations of the two Caesars deceived nobody, not even themselves. It is by no means an impossible task to unscrew the Italian end of the Rome-Berlin axis. If ever Germany and Italy went to war as allies, it would only be with serious misgivings on the part of one of them—the one selected by circumstances to play the rear legs of the horse. At the moment Italy occupies this unenviable position. There is little danger to-day of Mussolini dragging Hitler behind him into some "adventure." The possibilities are rather the other way round.

## VI

This may have been a depressing book, by virtue of its nature. I believe that the problems I have outlined are really dangerous to the peace of the world. If I were a racing tout, I would tip Poland and Hungary very strongly—maybe in the reverse order—with longer-odds candidates in Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Bulgaria. If the race is to be over a long distance, I should have to consider the strong claims for a place of the Baltic States. And, although I confess I have no reason except instinct to prompt the fear, I have an uneasy suspicion that we have not heard the last of the problems of the Adriatic, including the future of Albania—and even Malta. Every one of these Danger Spots depends directly or indirectly on the attitude of Germany. No man in history has had such an undisputed grip on the peace of Europe as Hitler.

But I have insisted that all these problems are soluble—and that war would not solve them, but only aggravate them. Running briefly over the problems from our original viewpoint of "Back to 1919 and the Fourteen Points," we must be rather surprised at the comparatively minor issues

involved. The surrender of Alsace-Lorraine was freely accepted by Germany. Eupen and Malmedy are trifling irritations, which could soon be eased in a more stable world. The western frontiers of Poland, we have seen, would surprisingly be changed only in trifling respects. In the east the Russians have ethnic claims supported by Wilson's principles, but as Russia has not presented those claims there is no reason to believe that they are likely to lead to conflict.

Over the question of Vilna, Lithuania definitely has a grievance—not because the city is Lithuanian, but because of its history and the manner of its seizure. We have suggested frontier rectifications here which might help to heal wounded pride.

The Balkan Danger Spots are dangerous because tempers there are more primitive—but the danger is almost removed if the rest of Europe is controlled, to act firmly at the first moment of outbreak. None of the Balkan problems is insoluble. By the standards of the Fourteen Points Bulgaria would certainly get a slice of the Dobrudja and probably of Macedonia as well. Yugoslavia might lose a small area of unimportant mountain land to Albania, but ought to gain a larger area from Italy. Germany, incorporating Austria, could certainly claim the northern Trentino.

Hungary, while disclaiming all hope of recovering her lost empire, would make territorial gains from both Roumania and Yugoslavia. Even then, large numbers of Hungarians would remain under foreign rule. Transfer of populations would have a beneficent effect, but the "island" in Transylvania would inevitably remain. By Wilson's principles, however, all countries would agree—again—to treat their minorities decently. An extension of the powers of local councils would make matters easier.

The case of Czechoslovakia is very difficult. It is as certain as anything can be that her present condition is not

final. With the downfall of the Nazi idea, either by force or by peaceful methods of gradualness, the question of the new Czechoslovakia immediately arises. Not many people to-day would argue in favour of the pre-Munich frontiers. On the other hand, the post-Munich frontiers would need drastic revision. The best future for Czechoslovakia would then appear to be a federal state on the Swiss model, with its integrity guaranteed.

The area of Europe is just over 4,000,000 square miles. If the map of Europe were to be re-drawn, following the lines of the Fourteen Points, correcting the hasty errors of 1919, removing the injustices and legacies of hatred, compromising where two principles clashed, pursuing always a policy of appeasement, the area which would change hands would be from 25,000 to 35,000 square miles:<sup>1</sup> 25,000 square miles out of 4,000,000—less than one per cent! Is it fantastic to claim that such trifling change is possible? In 1919 some 620,315 square miles were transferred forcibly!

And if the atmosphere of Europe is disturbed to-day, it is far more propitious to peaceful appeasement than it was in 1919!

## VI

Five years ago I was talking with a man who could speak for Germany: unfortunately he was not talking for publication, so I cannot quote his name—which is a pity. It was no formal interview, but a conversation; indeed, for the first half-hour all the questions were flung at me. The German was very anxious to know the opinion of the British Man-in-the-Street about Germany and the Nazis—he wanted public opinion's verdict, not an official view. Although without authority to represent the Man-in-the-Street, I gave it as my reading of his mind that judgment

<sup>1</sup> These figures do not include Czechoslovakia and Albania.

was temporarily suspended. He realized that Germany had grievances, particularly since the War, but the Nazi method of righting them did not appeal to him. The persecution of the Jews, the petty excesses of the new regime, the murder of opponents, concentration camps, and the like—they must never expect British opinion to countenance these. Nevertheless, I suggested, in the long run Britain would base her opinion on National Socialism on a broader viewpoint—that of peace or war. If its policy led to peace, then the present excesses would soon be forgotten: if it led to war, then Nazi Germany must look for the inexorable opposition of Britain.

Then I turned to the attack. "*Does your policy mean war?*" I demanded. "Don't answer unless you can do it frankly, but your policy of rearmament, of bold words, of 'strength'—are they incidental to the policy, or its life? Have you fixed the idea of a new European war as a goal?"

It was an ingenuous question, but we were on such terms that it could be answered outside diplomatic phrases. His reply was very illuminating. "Napoleon used to say that he would only accept battle if he had a seventy per cent chance of victory. Germany will not accept battle unless she has a ninety per cent chance of victory."

The more you look at it, the sounder sense it is. Nazi Germany could not survive a lost war. Indeed, Nazi Germany could not survive a *long* war. We have already seen that her mineral resources are much less than in 1914; her reserves are poor, and her financial position weak. Further, no "ideology" could cope with the miseries of a long war. Any war which did not give immediate victory to Germany would almost automatically hand over the country to Communism—and this the Nazis do *not* desire to risk.

My German's remark supplies the key-stone to all Germany's foreign policy since 1933. At that time she had

no friends—had not a ten per cent chance of victory. Now she has Italy as an ally, Hungary and Spain as her friends, and Yugoslavia as a potential neutral. But has she a ninety per cent chance of victory? Not even if all her friends and quasi-friends played true to present form could Germany claim that her chance of victory was fifty per cent, or anything near it.

To date Hitler has achieved some striking successes without involving himself in war. He has interpreted popular feeling correctly—maybe the method of interrogating a typical Man-in-the-Street has been employed more than once. Hitler *knew* when he marched into the Rhineland that popular resentment in Britain and even in France would be mild. He knew that the general feeling in Britain was that the restrictions were so unnatural that no country could be expected to accept them indefinitely. The tragedy is that we allowed these restrictions to remain so long that they first produced Hitler and then allowed him the initiative in policy—an initiative which he still precariously holds.

Even the invasion of Austria aroused the resentment in Britain only because of its method of force. It had always seemed reasonable to us that the Austrians should join up with the Germans—if they wanted. Similarly in the case of the Sudeten Germans: whence would our rallying cry have come in 1938, had we fought to prevent Germans joining Germans? The sanctity of treaties would not count against such an emotional theme.

But, of course, the seizure of Czechoslovakia changed all ideas and removed any mental reservations. It was not that another batch of promises had been broken—a new principle was involved. Here was no junction of German and German, but the deliberate conquest of another race. In a day we were flung back to the dark ages.

Hence the sudden change in British ideas and policy. The immediate danger is that Hitler may not realize the

fundamental alteration of outlook—it is notorious that he has been ill-advised by associates who profess to know Britain. Does he still refuse to believe that Britain will go to war if he invades Poland?

I believe that Hitler fears war as much as we do. His military advisers are capable and confident, but they can face facts. They know that they could not win a quick victory. Their aeroplanes could smash Paris, but French aeroplanes could lay the Rhine cities in ruins. Neither of these things would win or lose a war. German armaments are strong, but could never batter their way through the Maginot line—the most remarkable fortifications I have ever seen. The Maginot line is not impregnable, but it would require fifty times the present weight of German artillery to blast a slow way through it: that is to say, it involves a long war.

No one in Germany knows better than Hitler that if Britain entered the war it would not be over in five minutes. In the air the advantage is still with the attack, but invention and organization advance apace, and retaliation would be effective. The great German manufacturing and mining districts are within easy bombing range of French bases. Our naval superiority is overwhelming. There is a tendency to-day to regard the British Navy as effete and obsolete: we get the impression, even from some official pronouncements, that a couple of Germans in a canoe could sink the entire fleet. This is a state of mind induced by a belief that we shall then be in a better frame to pay for a bigger and better navy: but the psychology is unsound. In any case, the British Navy is still the biggest and best in the world, and the weapon that Germany fears more than any other is not the aeroplane or the tank, but the blockade.

Germany now imports over half of her iron ore. She imports most of her oil—though she is producing 5,000,000 tons a year from coal. It is expensive, and costs 6s. a gallon. Further, it is very volatile, and does not retain its



properties longer than three months—that is to say, it cannot be stored for war purposes. Dozens of essential war supplies are entirely imported—and are paid for with difficulty. In 1914 Germany was the third creditor nation in the world: to-day she is already a debtor. Her system of trade by barter depends upon a highly organized industry, *and could not function in war time.*

The fact that her army is of colossal size does not necessarily increase its efficiency. There is a grave shortage of officers, which can scarcely be remedied for some years to come. Equipment and armaments are excellent—but are far from being sufficient to force an instant decision. They never can reach that point, as British, French and Russian policies have shown: as German striking power mounts, so does ours.

I emphasize again that in arms, as in alliances, Germany is still only half-way to her ninety per cent chance of victory. It would be madness for Nazi Germany to go to war.

I believe Hitler appreciates this. War to him must be a last resort, only to be accepted in a desperate situation. Sometimes in the fire of his creed he has over-reached himself, but in private conversation you get a truer view. If war were forced upon him, he would fight, but in spite of all his extravagances, I cannot credit that he would deliberately provoke a European conflict.

It is quite conceivable, however, that he might unwittingly blunder into war. He has "followed his instinct" hitherto with remarkable success. He has appreciated the inertia of the democratic Powers, and has walked to victory without conflict. But it is by no means certain that he has appreciated the growing firmness of the democracies, and he might be tempted to repeat his Rhineland-Austria methods. The time has gone by when this can be done without conflict. If we can convince Hitler of this, then the fear of war recedes.

There can of course be no question of the repression of Hitler by force—the time for that has also gone, and those who under-estimate his grip on Germany merely deceive themselves. It could have been done when he marched into the Rhineland. Had Britain and France presented a firm front, then we might have heard the last of Hitler—or, at least, of aggressive methods. Indeed, had it been certain that Britain and France would present a firm front, then there would have been no march into the Rhineland. It is useless to blame the government because this forcible violation of solemn treaties was not met firmly. My readers will remember that the interest evoked was of the mildest character—that is to say, British public opinion did not demand firmness. It could see the German point of view—but it might also have reflected that one violation was likely to lead to another. But it was so little interested in European affairs that it did not bother. To-day it *is* interested; if it could rewrite history, it might decide on more drastic action. If Hitler is quite certain that the democracies will meet his next aggressive move firmly, it will never be made. Now is the time to convince him—and to negotiate a truce on the basis of that conviction.

Is he so convinced? It cannot be claimed that our policy since his rise has tended to convey the present paramount idea. Indeed, on so many occasions we have appeared to confirm the views of some of his trusted advisers: these men, after a brief sojourn in England during which they were apparently acquainted only with people who looked upon Hitler as the guardian of Europe against Communism, assured him that Britain would never move—was too little interested or too decadent to oppose his policy of force and surprise. I have found in Germany a complete lack of appreciation of British character: I could scarcely be surprised at that, for we are not easy to understand. In Germany they appreciate the adage about straining at

a gnat and swallowing a camel, but they do not appreciate that the British usually swallow the camel before straining at the gnat. Recently I tried to persuade an audience of Germans that, although we had swallowed the Czechoslovak camel, we should strain at the Danzig gnat.

I pleaded with them to believe that the last unopposed move by force had been made—that European war was inevitable if another German soldier crossed a foreign frontier. I asked them to send over not aloof diplomats, but ordinary men to mingle with our people, to sense the completely new spirit of resistance. I think I scored my strongest point with a "funny story" which went down very well—I heard later that it made a lightning round of Germany.

Herr Hitler (ran my very apochryphal anecdote) was to pay a state visit to England. Armed at Calais he found a British destroyer waiting to carry him over to Dover.

"I'm not travelling in this!" he proclaimed. "I want the *Queen Mary*."

"But, your excellency——"

"The *Queen Mary*, or we march!"

The harassed officials, desperately anxious not to mar the visit at its outset, hurriedly sent to Southampton for the *Queen Mary*, and Hitler was transported to Dover.

"Is this the royal train!" he demanded.

"No, your excellency."

"Then get it."

"But——"

"The royal train, or we march!"

So the royal train was secured, and he arrived in London, and was driven to Claridge's.

"I don't stay here!" he said. "I want Buckingham Palace."

"But——"

"Buckingham Palace, or we march!"

The king solved this difficulty with his usual tact, and retired to Windsor. Then Hitler called for the official programme.

"This won't do," he said. "This afternoon I want to see Arsenal play Wolverhampton Wanderers at Stamford Bridge."

"But, your excellency, that's impossible. Arsenal are playing at Manchester to-day."

"Arsenal and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Stamford Bridge this afternoon, or we march!"

"All right, dammit, you'll have to march—we can't upset the football season for you!"

My Nazi audience was much amused—and impressed, for some of them had met Englishmen intimately, and knew that the spirit of the illustration was sound.

I have no great sympathy with the argument that economic difficulties in Germany are so bad that the country is bound to "blow up" soon. For one thing, conditions are not so bad as painted; and, while there is some discontent, Hitler's popularity is still supreme. In any case, the argument would be even more dangerous if it were true. In olden days, if there was discontent in England, the king used to declare war as a distraction. The comparison is too obvious.

The British outlook is now clarified. Indeed, in this lies the key to our restored firmness: the prospects may not be rosy, but at least we know where we are—there is nothing so unnerving as uncertainty. We are, of course, firmly bound to France. We have given perfectly clear guarantees to Poland, Roumania, Greece and Turkey—if they are invaded, and resist, we fight. The terms of the Polish agreement are such that if Poland decided to defend the Baltic States—as she would be almost compelled to do—we automatically take up arms. We have given no new guarantees to Holland and Belgium, but it has been plainly

stated that we should march to their defence. Nor, surely could we stand by and see Denmark or Switzerland overrun. This limits the field of potential German attack to Hungary, Yugoslavia—and Italy.

We have seen that Italy is very susceptible in a war against a strong Power—her long sea-coast is indefensible, and her industrial areas are at the mercy of the French air fleet. We come to the inevitable conclusion that Germany and Italy could not hope for victory against a coalition of Britain, France and Russia. This does not mean that we should attempt to domineer, but it does mean that we need not accept dictation from anybody. There is no question of "calling their bluff"—Mussolini, at any rate, never bluffs—but it is high time that the initiative in European affairs returned to the democratic states. It would be a great day for Europe if it returned to Britain—and many signs point in that direction: at least the lead of the anti-aggression powers is already in her hands.

The Man-in-the-Street is convinced that the French post-war foreign policy was by no means infallible. He can appreciate French anxieties, but he has never approved of the policy of kicking a man while he was down. He sees the unanticipated results of the French handling of foreign affairs since the War—the French held the initiative for a decade, but did more than the Germans to elevate Hitler to his present position. I remember calling upon a French statesman a few months ago. On his study table was a report of Hitler's offer of April 17th, 1934—when he suggested a German army of 300,000 men and an air force half the size of that of France. And France turned it down! My friend was now reading Hitler's offer again, seriously—but it is no longer open. The Man-in-the-Street may know little of foreign affairs, but he knows that you can't hold down a nation for ever, so that it is best to make terms while the advantage is with you.

The French attitude was short-sighted, but it was at least understandable. Hitler has a habit of breaking a treaty one day and offering a new one the next—not a method which inspires confidence. Yet I believe he is sincere in his offers at the time he makes them. We cannot say that he is not, for we have never yet taken him at his word.

I suggest that the time has come when we should. The rape of Austria was probably precipitated by events—it was never far from Hitler's mind, but might have been postponed for years. Czechoslovakia must be the last of violent revisions of the peace treaties. With the possible and doubtful exception of a formal occupation of Danzig, by arrangement with Poland, there is no other revision of the treaties which Hitler can accomplish without the virtual certainty of war. I do not believe he intends to run that risk, so the moment may be propitious. There is likely to be a period of halt while the armed truce controls the international situation. This is the period in which the initiative can pass to us.

It is important to know exactly where we are. We cannot sit and scowl at Germany for ever. If we are not to be friends, then one day we shall quarrel. To become friends does not imply that we have to do everything Hitler wants. Our friendship is just as valuable to Hitler as his to us—probably more so—and the time has come when he must do some of the things *we* want.

I remember arguing in 1937 with a prominent Nazi about colonies—a very frank argument, such as a German can appreciate. He accused us of taking them by fraud—had we not signed a treaty agreeing that a European war should never be extended to Africa?

"I don't think I should talk about broken treaties if I were you," I replied. "I can produce 'scraps of paper' far more potent."

"But what right had you to take them from us?"

"A very elementary right, well recognized in Germany—the right of conquest."

"A right of force!" he complained.

"I agree. I don't uphold it. But if ever I wanted arguments to back it, I could find plenty in Germany. Have you ever amused yourself by reading the terms of peace formulated by the German Government at various periods of the War—when they thought they were winning?"

"That is not the point. I am not responsible for what a German leader said in 1916."

"You inherit history. You cannot avoid it. You are just as responsible for the Kaiser as I am for Lloyd George—we both have to accept the results of their actions. And, be frank. Suppose Germany had won the War, and *you* had been Chancellor then? Is there nothing you would have taken—by the right of conquest? You know the answer. Let me be frank, brutally frank. You lost your colonies because you lost the War. It does not pay to win a war, and it certainly does not pay to lose one."

"But why should you take our colonies when you already have a quarter of the world? You did not need them."

"I might retort 'Neither did you,' since you scarcely used them. But in 1919 we were thinking in terms of strategy. Why should we leave you with a dozen potential naval bases scattered about the globe?"

"The day will come when you will return them!"

"That may not be impossible," I agreed. "But you may have to wait a little while. In England, generally speaking, two kinds of government are possible—Conservative or Labour. You cannot expect a Conservative government to give away the British Empire! And you cannot expect a Labour government, although it may not be so imperially minded, to make a present of vast territories to a Fascist state!"

"Yet there is a strong opinion in England favouring the return of the colonies."

"If you refer to our Fascists, you will have to wait longer than ever. And I shouldn't take too much notice of the society clique which heils Hitler to-day: they may be heiling Stalin to-morrow—though they are much more likely to transfer their affections to the latest all-in wrestler, or the newest religion. No, your biggest hope comes from another group which would hand you back a colony or two as hostages to fortune."

"Hostages to fortune? I don't understand."

"That is, we could safely hand back colonies to you, because in the event of war we could easily take them again! Thus you would consider very carefully before ever you went to war. But actually there is a very considerable opinion in Britain which well understands your desire to regain your colonies, but is frankly suspicious of you. The point is, what are you prepared to give for them?"

"To give? What, how much?" he asked in surprise.

"I don't mean how much money: they are not for sale. But you don't imagine that we are going to give them up for nothing, merely at the asking. You've got to give something too."

"But what can we give? We have no territory to exchange——"

"No, no; it isn't that. You know our position very well. We are a satiated state. No war, however successful, could ever benefit us to the slightest degree—even if we won, we would lose. We are a nation of traders: we want peace. You may protest as you wish, but the peace of Europe lies in the hands of Germany. It ought not to be difficult for you to think of a method which would give a reasonable guarantee of twenty years' peace, and you would find that most other matters are only subsidiary."



"The question of the colonies has nothing to do with Europe," he claimed.

"It has. We say so—and we are the people who decide that particular point. Now let us have a calm glance round Europe. We will admit, for the purpose of argument, that the Treaty of Versailles went further than it should have done, in the heat of the moment of victory—although I do not agree that you would have gone no further if you had won. But most of its irritating provisions have now disappeared—either by agreement or by forcible revision. Why, since the seizure of Austria, Germany is actually greater in population and in territory than she was in 1914! What are your grievances to-day? The Polish Corridor and Silesia? You have accepted the position there for ten years. Alsace-Lorraine? Hitler has solemnly declared more than once that that is and never will be an issue between Germany and France. Eupen-Malmedy-Schleswig? These are trivial. So is Memel, and in Danzig you already have your way. Look around all these things, and tell me—are any of them worth a war? No need to talk to you of the horrors of war, since you knew them yourself. If you follow the road of force much further, it leads inevitably to war. Are any of these things worth war?"

"No," he said, emphatically.

"Good! Now there is one other point. We have talked so far of the things we know you want. There may be other things you want, of which we may not know. It is important that we should find out. Your aspirations in south-east Europe, for example—probably this question is a hundred times as important as the other. That you should look for a flow of trade to the Balkans is natural, and conflicts with no other interests. But some of your speeches strike a peculiar note. You refer to the German settlers scattered freely over south-eastern Europe, and from some proclamations it might be gathered that you look for

political control over these people. That is to say, you look for a virtual conquest of the states of south-eastern Europe."

He denied this, but still left me uneasy. His arguments became general. In and about Germany we could take a pencil and a piece of paper and make a list of German grievances—and the list would not be at all disconcerting. But on the question of "exiled" Germans we stuck on generalities.

He claimed that it was all a matter of race—the Germans must protect their own kin. I told him frankly that I could not accept that argument. I compared his vivid interest in the woes of the Germans in Czechoslovakia with his complete indifference to the far deeper grievances of the Germans in Poland and Italy. That is to say, the propaganda and agitation were purely a matter of foreign policy and strategy, and had nothing to do with protection of race.

In spite of plain speaking, we parted good friends. From many points of view the conversation satisfied me, but before any general European settlement can be made, German policy must be made explicit. It is one of the first objects of statesmanship to persuade or to force Germany into the open on this question. I believe it could be done—by the "Five Year Plan" I have suggested.

## VII

Politicians for years have talked about the "general settlement" of Europe, but have never got beyond talking; for a "general settlement" involves a large measure of give and take, and to date no country has been prepared to give. The soundest ideas so far have come from Mussolini, of all people. The Four-Power Pact which he negotiated in 1933 with Ramsay MacDonald might have been the basis of big things—it actually stated that it would take to account Article 19 of the League of Nations Covenant—that dealing

with the possibilities of the revision of the treaties! The Pact was duly agreed by France and Germany, but in the fashion of those days it was never ratified. Everybody agreed, but nobody did anything.

Mussolini is known to favour a European Federation of States, excluding Russia. It is certain that if peace is to be preserved some form of collective bond, loose or strong, has to be devised. The inclusion of Russia might not prove an insuperable difficulty: in fact, no "general settlement" of Europe can exclude Russia. There is, and always has been, room in Europe for a variety of political creeds, and in effect on human life there is less difference between Fascism and Communism than there is between Fascism and Democracy. The leadership in this federation might easily pass to the Power which sponsored it—another reason for British initiative rather than Italian. The Rome-Berlin axis may support a part of the European car, but Britain's place is at the steering-wheel.

It seems certain that the next two years will be critical. By the end of 1939, or at latest 1940, German rearmament will be complete. If her purpose is indeed war, these will be the dangerous years. But I do not believe that war is her purpose—unless the intervening weeks are grossly mismanaged. I do not believe that a conflict of "ideologies" is inevitable. There is nothing new in the present wide range of different political creeds. There are people in England who are appalled at the idea that we may find ourselves engaged in a war by the side of Soviet Russia. Yet we were not ashamed to fight by the side of Czarist Russia, whose political system was just as far removed from ours as any Soviet.

These "ideologies" have been exaggerated in other lands than their own. Yet time works wonders with them. Twenty years ago Russia was a danger to the peace of the world because she was determined to evangelize the world

with another new creed. To-day that mood has long passed, and to-day Russia remains substantially behind her own frontiers, in some ways more conservative than Britain.

Our first object is to decide what Germany wants. We have on occasion sent statesmen to find out, but it is time to couple another question to their inquiries—what is Germany prepared to give? We are quite strong enough to stand up and talk frankly to Hitler and anybody else. We should probably find that Hitler's demands included legitimate claims, debatable propositions, and impossible suggestions. If he were not prepared to negotiate, there would be nothing more to say—but we should know where we were.

A second object in this country is to create a strong and, as nearly as is humanly possible, united public opinion on foreign affairs: that is to say, on a long-term foreign policy, as distinct from the present and temporary unity against further aggression. The state of Europe is far too serious for petty squabbles. Let our politicians argue as much as they wish about Means Tests, Pig Marketing Boards and other domestic issues, but on questions involving peace or war Britain should show a united front to the world. The differences of democracies are closely watched and misinterpreted by Fascist states: it is assumed that, because Frenchmen quarrel bitterly over politics, they could never work together in an emergency. The argument is utterly fallacious: if a German helmet crosses the frontier, the French Fascist and Communist would be found manning the same machine-gun. But the fact that this is not appreciated in Germany tends to give the Germans a too-rosy picture of their own power, and might induce them to risks which were not apparent.

In Britain there is a section which would defy Hitler to the extent of provoking war: there is another section—small in these days—which would give him everything he wants. Neither of these is important, for the vast body of

Men-in-the-Street is of moderate views. It would not be impossible to formulate a foreign policy which could be backed by ninety per cent of the people of this country. I have already sketched its outlines.

Before we proceed to extremities, we must definitely give Hitler a chance to prove that he is sincere as he claims—he generally *is* sincere, at the time. When next he offers peace, we must take him at his word—and keep the initiative in negotiations. We could suggest the five-year “holiday”—a definite acceptance of the *status quo* for five years, and a cessation of external propaganda, with a promise of reconsideration of grievances when a better atmosphere was attained. This would be a most moderate gesture, and no pacific nation could decline it. If Hitler refused, then we should reach for our rifles and gas-masks.

If Europe could gain five years of peace the crisis could pass—not to return for a long time, if ever. We must always look ahead, but to this generation the next twenty years are far more important than the following century. We ought to plan on realities, not on suppositions that “if *only* men would do this, or that, then the world would be saved.” An ideal is most encouraging when it *appears* to be just within reach, even if actually it is just beyond: when it appears and is impossible of attainment, then its effect is only disappointed disillusion. It is quite obvious that within the next twenty years we are not going to achieve that happy state when all men are brothers and when a tank will be a museum-curiosity, but at least it is not impossible to achieve a stage when men are friends and a tank little more than an item in a military parade.

If our suggestion were accepted, it is understood that the problems of Europe are not solved, but postponed. Some would solve themselves in that time, others would be eased by a friendlier atmosphere. In the breathing space we should have to tackle the world's economic problems—

we might dig out again the Van Zeeland report as a starting-point. A revival of trade would do more than anything else to ease the worries of Europe. A vast amount of preparatory work would be necessary if the conference of 1943 or 1944 were to be successful. An atmosphere of trust would have to be generated—that is why it is essential that the initiative should rest with Britain; not Germany, or France, or Italy. Nations would have to come to the conference prepared to give as well as to take—and Britain would have to be one of the givers. Quite apart from the moral aspect, it would pay us to give, for no nation has more to lose by war.

The leadership of Britain would have a vital effect on the smaller nations of Europe, which have always thought very highly of British ideas and institutions. Of late years their confidence has waned—it seemed that we had vacated our old seat as champions of liberty. In fear and anxiety, some of them have made preliminary tentative obeisance to Hitler and Mussolini. We have now to persuade them that security can be preserved by other means than submission to dictatorships. The small states are vitally important. The Balkan Entente, if it holds firm, is as strong as a great Power: the Scandinavian bloc is a great influence for peace.

The mere accumulation of armaments is not a policy in itself. I believe that the British public would take a risk for peace. It will back a principle rather than expediency, as it showed plainly at the time of the Abyssinian War. British public opinion is one of the most powerful forces in the world: another—American opinion—is moving along parallel lines. Year by year America gets more interested in European affairs—and, despite the Middle West, more involved. This is all to the good. It is not a question of direct intervention in European politics—the trend of opinion is bound to have a great influence.

The outlook of educated America on Europe is friendly and illuminating.

One elementary comment ought to be unnecessary—that peace in Europe will not come by abuse of Hitler or Mussolini. The best antidote to darkness is light.

Although my catalogue of Europe's Danger Spots may be depressing, I am very optimistic. I have mingled intimately with the peoples of most European countries, and have found no trace of a will to war. If war comes, it will in itself be a condemnation of every form of government, democratic and Fascist alike. I do not believe that war is inevitable: on the contrary, those who so proclaim it are the worst enemies of peace. Instead of an attitude of fatalism or of unfounded optimism, I would like to see the Man-in-the-Street cultivating a firm interest in foreign affairs, which are much more important and interesting than football pools. Democracy involves duties as well as privileges: our politicians have spoken in clichés so often about our precious heritage of liberty that we take it for granted, and maybe do not appreciate it as we should. Our liberty can be menaced by events outside Britain—may suffer because of Continental issues. It is better to think about these issues than to fight about them. United British opinion means a lot.

Failing America, we are the most detached of the Great Powers, and can take a fairer view of Europe's problems. A resolute, educated public opinion in this country would strengthen Britain's hand in European affairs. I am convinced that the leadership towards peace can only come from this country—but no government can move unless overwhelmingly backed by the British people. With that backing and a five-year truce, there is a lot that Britain might do: there is very little we might not do. The dropping alike of dictatorial blustering and diplomatic finesse, and the substitution of common sense, and there is hope for

the world. Napoleon had another trite saying: "The situation is never so bad or so good as it appears to be." It does not appear to be very good at the moment, but is not so bad as it seems. At least we are in a position to face our problems without fear.

Summed up in a few phrases, the dangers of Europe are these: certain countries have serious or minor grievances. Some of these are irritations which can be removed by liberal treatment, while others are so complicated that palliatives only can be applied—the problems remain, but toleration can remove them from the category of grievances. There is little or no prospect of securing this essential atmosphere of trust and toleration until the soluble problems have been tackled—one grievance removed by friendly negotiation would bring back confidence to Europe. This atmosphere cannot be generated in a day, but once it is agreed as essential the first step has already been made. Far-seeing men can then plan ahead—the expunging of many Danger Spots and the neutralization of others: the sweeping away of artificial economic restrictions: the renewal or recreation of the League of Nations. But the first step is the most important: the irritations must be removed.

There is one grave political objection to the five-year plan I have suggested—it is too simple: The Man-in-the-Street is confused by protocols and formulæ, but prefers plain common sense.

. . . . .

If I listened only to the *oratory* of dictators I might be pessimistic. Yet, even in Europe's darkest days, I can find comfort in one substantial fact: I have wandered in every country of Europe, and have mingled intimately with the peoples of those countries, and have found no trace of a will to war. This remark applies to Germany as much as to



England. Think back to Munich—we have been so disappointed with its results that we have forgotten the relief of that day, when for the first time Hitler was halted, even though the halt was to prove only momentary. People argued at the time as to the influence which caused the halt: the appeal of President Roosevelt, the intervention of Signor Mussolini, the persistence of Mr. Chamberlain—or the mobilization of the British Navy. But I know one influence which must have affected Hitler violently: the last-minute realization that the people of Germany did not wish to go to war. I was in Germany during the preceding weeks, and was convinced of this. By a process of lying unprecedented in history, the Germans were persuaded that their cousins in the Sudetenland were being ill-treated—but not that it was necessary to go to war. It is significant that although in Britain few people have a word to say for Hitler, and fewer for the policy of aggression, there is no enmity towards the German people. Recently I chanced on some newspapers of August 1914—with pictures showing German crowds cheering in the streets as the army marched off to war. There were no pictures like that in September 1938. The German crowds in the streets were cheering a British Prime Minister on an errand of peace.

Since there is no will to war among the peoples of Europe (my only anxiety about Germany lies in the fact that the propaganda about encirclement is achieving more success than any other argument: it is always easy to persuade a people to defend itself), the European prospect can never be quite so dark as it appears. It resolves itself into a formula, simple and yet immensely difficult: that if the peoples of Europe could advise some method of impressing or imposing their wishes on their leaders, then that "long period of peace" as ardently desired in Germany as in England, may be nearer than we realize.

## STOP PRESS

### I

THE peoples of Europe did *not* devise a means of impressing or imposing their wishes on their leaders—in time. So a handful of men have been allowed to plunge the world into misery. It will be Hitler's charge at the bar of history that he led Europe into a war which nobody wanted. I doubt if ever in its history has Europe entered a war more reluctantly.

It is unnecessary to insist that this book was never intended as a prophecy, but as a background of information. The outbreak of war makes that information even more important than it was before: however and when the war ends, the problems of Europe are still unsolved and must be tackled. Any territorial adjustment during hostilities must be regarded as temporary only.

I propose to add a few comments to co-relate the matter of the book to present events. The book was first published in 1938, was specially revised and brought up-to-date for this edition in July 1939. I am writing now on September 22nd, 1939.

### II

Instead of dramatic forecasts, I tried in the book to emphasize the aspects of European problems which seemed to me to be most important. Only on page 20 did I allow myself the emphasis of italics in prophecy, when I suggested that the cause or provocation of the next war would be found in the Treaties of Peace which concluded the last. I am unhappy to record that this anticipation has been fulfilled.

During the summer of 1939 it became painfully obvious that the Polish question was coming to a head. German methods are amazingly conservative, and the technique of the rape of Czechoslovakia was repeated word for word, incident for incident. The Nazi leaders must hold a very low opinion of the world's intelligence, to imagine that it could be deceived twice by the same method!

Some people tend to blame the Poles because Hitler's terms sounded so reasonable. In March 1939, for example, Germany demanded the return of Danzig, Poland to be allowed a Free Port, together with the right to build a motor road across the Corridor. In sane times these offers would have been worthy of consideration—but after the unhappy parallel of Czechoslovakia, who can blame the Poles for suspecting that they were only a beginning? (Events have proved that their suspicions were well founded, for Hitler has now announced that the complete partition of Poland had been settled with Stalin before the war began! He claimed that war would have been avoided if Poland had given up Danzig and the Corridor—and the next day admitted that he had arranged weeks beforehand with Stalin that the German frontier should be advanced to the Vistula!)

The familiar course followed: a violent press attack on Poland—the Poles changing in a night from chivalrous friends to murderous fiends: Polish "atrocities" which strangely enough could never be proved, and which even if true were mild compared with German conduct in Czechoslovakia: then a series of frontier incidents, with "free corps" raiding from Germany or Danzig. If any of the raiders were killed by Polish frontier guards, this was "massacre."

I still remain of the opinion that Hitler did not really want war—he expected to get all he wanted without war. With Danzig and the Corridor as a start, he could have

absorbed the rest of Poland as he did Czechoslovakia—he gives us the formula in *Mein Kampf*. He is singularly unfortunate in his advisers. He did not believe that Poland would fight: when Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier time after time solemnly declared that British and French pledges *were* pledges, and not bluffs, Hitler still refused to believe. Such mental blindness is a disease.

And Hitler had a trump card up his sleeve. For months he had been negotiating with Stalin—as many believe, over the head of Molotoff. On August 21st the German-Russian pact was announced. Here, it was believed, was something which would frighten Britain and France out of their engagements. Instead, the following day they were solemnly renewed!

From that moment war was inevitable. The machine was moving, and only the collapse of Poland could stop it—by allowing it to run into empty space. The vast German forces had been gathered on the Polish frontier as a threat—which actually stiffened rather than weakened resistance. To a dictator “saving face” is immensely important, and Hitler could scarcely abandon his mission of rescuing his oppressed Germans!

Since war became inevitable, the events of the last days of peace are of interest rather than importance. Were they not so tragic they would have been comic—the claim that the Poles had rejected terms they had never seen, for example, savoured of sheer farce. The British Blue Book covering the events is one of the most amazing documents of its kind.

Before considering the war in its general aspects, let us review briefly its present effect on the principal Danger Spots of Europe, endeavouring to answer some of the questions arising from a perusal of this book after the outbreak of a war which it sought to prevent.

## III

I have no word to subtract from what I wrote of Poland's problems, which the war has done nothing to solve. Of the ultimate fate of the Corridor and other predominantly Polish districts there ought to be no question. The future of Danzig will presumably depend upon the margin by which we win the war.

Incidentally, it is worthy of note that Hitler's technique, outlined in *Mein Kampf*, was faithfully followed in this case. The first demand was for Danzig only; then the Corridor was added, and the final claim was for the 1914 frontiers—including Silesia!

It was of course inevitable that Poland would be overpowered—the question was how long she could hold out. My own opinion, like that of many people who know Poland well, was that she might hope to hold Germany at bay for several months. We had not envisaged, however, the concentration of 80 per cent of the German army, and its entire mechanized force, on the Polish frontier. The Poles were beaten, not by superior courage, but by material. Their aeroplanes were outnumbered from the outset by six to one, increasing later to twenty to one. Their armoured units were woefully insufficient to guard such long frontiers; and, like many a brave people before them, they had to discover that courage is useless against steel. A Polish cavalry brigade of 3,000 men rode out gallantly to give battle to advancing tanks near Katowice; less than a hundred cavalymen returned.

The fact is that the seizure of Slovakia was a vital blow to Poland's strategic security. It was not merely another long flank added to already extensive frontiers—it was the nearest point for a thrust at the vital C.O.P. area on which Poland's war effort so largely depended.

Of the courage and devotion of the Poles, the world has

had ample proof. As I write, Warsaw is still defying German attacks; the end is of course inevitable, but even this despairing stand is of great value to the Allied cause. Nor is the battle over with the fall of Warsaw. All over Poland are isolated bands of soldiers. There is ample opportunity for the secretion of arms—to be produced at a convenient moment. When a whole country is united against a conqueror, guerrilla warfare is inevitable and easy. It is certain that Hitler will have to maintain a large garrison in his share of Poland: and I do not envy the soldiers of that garrison—there is nothing so unnerving as a shot in the dark.

## IV

Stalin claimed that he marched into Poland to protect White Russians and Ukrainians. It is significant that they never asked for his protection. Further, to prove his sincerity, Stalin promptly advanced a hundred miles beyond the extreme limit of Russian and Ukrainian territory, and brought millions of Poles within his domain. It is also alleged that the advancing Red Army was met with bouquets and folk-songs. That may be true. There were communists in Poland, of course, as in all countries: there were White Russians and (especially) Ukrainians who felt the blood-call of their brothers over the frontier: there were even more people who, with memories of stories they had heard, were only too anxious to be at peace with the new regime, even if it should be only temporary. Both Hitler and Stalin have a way of dealing with opposition: most people know this, and not everyone cares to run risks.

It is reported, too, that the Russians advanced with considerable subtlety. Eye-witnesses confirm that Russian and Polish soldiers were seen marching happily side by side. This does not mean that the Poles were instantly converted to Communism. Communications in Eastern Poland were

always backward, and in war time must have been chaotic. It appears that many bodies of Polish troops joined the invaders cheerfully *because they believed that the Russians had come to help them fight the Germans!*

It was at first reported that Hitler desired only to resume the German 1914 frontiers, and Stalin the Curzon line of 1920, leaving a part of "Congress" Poland of about 20,000,000 people as a buffer state between Germany and Russia. This would have been a comprehensible policy. The division of Poland into two portions reveals, however, that racial principles have been completely abandoned—Poland is the sport of power politics at their worst.

"Since Poland is defeated and must be occupied by an enemy until the Allied victory," a Polish diplomat said to me to-day, "we would rather that occupier were Germany. Under Germany we should suffer, but our people would be united, and the moment Germany were defeated Poland would become Poland again. But Russia is different. She is determined to kill the spirit of Polish nationality. She has already begun to kill off our intelligentsia, accusing them of 'counter-revolution'—three days after the Russians entered Poland! And she has of course a leaven of Polish communists on which to work—these misguided men in all countries appear to rate Russia as a little heaven, high above their own country."

For my own part, I thought he underestimated the virile patriotism of his own countrymen, whose race had for 150 years been subject to Russian and German rule, but which remained Polish. But another of his questions was more difficult to answer.

"We arrive at the moment when the Allies have beaten Germany: the western half of Poland is freed. How are we going to get Russia out of the eastern half?"

I have been somewhat concerned to note during the last few days—since the intervention of Russia—a slight but

marked decline in British interest in the fate of Poland. I would like all my readers to re-examine the terms of our guarantee; I would like all our newspaper editors to re-read their own editorials written in the first days of the war—to pin them up on the walls until the time when peace terms are being settled.

I have made no attempt to whitewash Poland. I confess to a great fondness for the Polish people, as for all peasant folk, but I do not pretend that the policy of its government has always been inspired. The seizure of Vilna, the ultimatum to Lithuania, the stab in Czechoslovakia's back at Teschen—these are not feats to arouse sympathetic reactions in British minds. Yet they do not affect Poland's case against Germany. Poland's system of government could scarcely be described as democratic: nor are all the inhabitants of Poland Poles. But we knew all about these things when we gave our guarantee.

Hitler claims that we encouraged the Poles to fight. For once he is right. Somewhere the halt to aggression had to be called, and we encouraged the Poles to make it. They could have made an accommodation with Hitler if they wished—could have made some small sacrifice, and could have avoided the vast suffering which now engulfs the country. We encouraged them to stand firm—it was right that they should stand firm. It is also right that we should not forget this at the appropriate moment.

## V

The course of events in Poland has brought three other subjects to the fore. A suggestion has been made that Russia will hand over Vilna to Lithuania. It would be an uneasy gift. Imagine the dilemma of the Lithuanians—burning with desire for the recovery of their ancient capital, but apprehensive of what might happen when Poland is reborn.



What will Hitler do with the Polish Jews? In his share of Poland there are about two millions of them. True, in his extremity he has forgotten some of his fulminations—has even begged Jews to return to aid their beloved Germany. Naturally, no one believes in his change of heart. He has now taken over treble the number of Jews he originally had in Germany. Further, most of the Polish Jews are a race apart, unassimilated—they are the very people, with their curls and caftans, who first aroused the disgust described in *Mein Kampf*. We can scarcely envy them their lot. In these violent days a pogrom might pass almost unnoticed.

In the negotiations with the Franco-British mission, Russia professed a perfectly legitimate concern about the security of the Baltic States. The protraction of the negotiations, in fact, was blamed on Russia's desire to guarantee the Baltic States against German aggression, while Britain and France were reluctant to give an unmasked guarantee. Now there is little fear of any German intrusion into the Baltic States—which are almost encircled by Russia. I can imagine anxious hearts in the Baltic capitals, where Russia would be just as unwelcome a visitor as Germany.

## VI

Turning for the moment to the following chapter, it is pleasant to record that one situation at least has been eased. Serbs and Croats have agreed to compose their major difficulties. Croatia is to enjoy local autonomy in all matters except defence, finance, and foreign policy; a coalition government of all parties and races now sits in Belgrade, ready to offer a united front to the difficulties and dangers confronting Yugoslavia. This is the best news which has come from the Balkans for many a long day. Everybody is pleased—except Hitler, whose chance of "legitimate" intervention has vanished.

Unhappily, the problem of the Dobrudja is still unsolved. Bulgaria is still the key-state of the Balkans. If she were satisfied, the Balkan bloc would be united, strong, and powerful, able to offer a forceful resistance to any aggressive power. Bulgaria's resentment removes an essential cornerstone. Roumania's position is particularly unpleasant, with Russia now occupying the whole of her northern frontier, and an unsatisfied Bulgaria to the south.

The internal position in Roumania is still unsettled. As I write, there comes the news of the murder of M. Calinescu, Roumania's "strong man," by the gallant youths of the German-backed Iron Guard. King Carol may be trusted to make a sternly appropriate reply, but he will need every ounce of his high intelligence and courage. In such unstable times as these, Roumania has too many unsolved problems. The menace of Russia is now very real, and the question of Bessarabia has again become "live." I fear that troubled days lie ahead for Roumania, now torn between German and Russian influence.

## VII

There is little to add to the Czechoslovak chapter—at the moment. The Czechs have revolted, and hundreds have been executed. They will revolt again many times before the end of the war. In the absence of arms, they can only have a nuisance-value to the Allied cause, but they will immobilize a large German army, alone a considerable contribution. And it may yet be from Czechoslovakia that the flame of revolt spreads to Germany.

In the meantime, Czechs from all over the world are forming a legion to fight in France. As in 1918, the new form of Czechoslovakia will be settled far from the homeland. Presumably justice for this ill-used country will be one of our major war aims.

The Slovaks have not enjoyed life under the German

"protectors" their leaders called in. The Slovak army has been disarmed: all semblance of independence has disappeared—in fact, if not on paper, Slovakia is a conquered province ruled by Germany. Only an infantile mind would have failed to foresee this.

The most interesting feature of the new situation in Central Europe lies in the common frontier between Russia and Ruthenia, now part of Hungary. We have seen that the Ruthenes are Ukrainians, own brothers of the great population now entirely under Russian control. Will Russia be content to sit on the Carpathian passes? Ruthenia is the cradle of the Slav race in Europe, of vast sentimental interest to Russia. The local name for the province, indeed, is Sub-Carpathian Russia, and the people usually call themselves Russians.

Hungary looks askance at her new neighbour. Nowhere in England has there been such distrust of Russia as in Hungary—which had one experience of a Communist regime and does not want another. The Russian sentries on the Ruthenian frontier must be the centre of many bitter thoughts.

Meanwhile Hungarian aspirations are unchanged. Statesmen and peasants alike hope to avoid active participation in the war, but there is a lingering hope that some violent wobble of the present instability may fling some portion of Hungary's lost domains towards the grip of the motherland. Yet the situation of Hungary is decidedly uneasy, and far-seeing men are no longer thinking of expansion but survival. Hungary has powerful neighbours and, while the morals of force politics prevail, *neither frontiers nor treaties* have any especial meaning.

The conduct of the smaller countries of Europe to date has not been especially heartening. Practically all of them fear Germany and Russia—yet they are rushing in to make accommodations with their prospective aggressors. Even

virile Yugoslavia, after refusing to recognize Soviet Russia for twenty-two years, hurries to make terms. Latvia hastens to withdraw diplomatic recognition of defeated Poland! This is not good enough. The small states of Europe must not expect Britain and France to fight all their battles for them. Individually they are weak, but collectively they are immensely powerful. They ought to have the courage to stand up for their principles. If they do not, they may be gobbled up one after the other.

## VIII

We return to general considerations. I have argued that Nazi Germany could not survive a long war; I still hold that opinion, and applaud the decision of our government and the French to decline rash adventures. We have only to hold on long enough, and we win—maybe without a spectacular military success at all. At the same time, it should be emphasized that a waiting war is a bigger strain on *morale*—especially on the home front—than a war of action, with the thrill of victory and the courage-stimulation of defeat. The determination of the civilian is every bit as important as the courage of the soldier. Nazi Germany cannot stand a long war: we can, but it will be no easy task, and will call for our grimmest endeavour.

Above all, we must not underestimate our opponents. Far too often we have been the victims of over-confidence and what is now called "wishful thinking." At the time of the march into Austria, our newspapers were full of stories about broken-down German tanks—the German equipment was so poor that it could not survive a march in what were virtually peace-time conditions. Yet, strangely enough, it was good enough to overwhelm Poland in war!

It would be folly to attempt to prophesy as to the course of the war—especially since the incursion of Russia. I know most of the countries of Europe intimately, but Russia is

incalculable. No sensible commentator would attempt to forecast what Stalin will do to-morrow.

He has ample choice. One opinion, widely held in Eastern Europe, is that he will project the Communist idea (or, perhaps I should say, the idea of the present Russian brand of state socialism—Stalin himself admits that it is not communism) under the guise of a Pan-Slav crusade. This would be a clever move. It was a popular idea in pre-1914 days; all its old appeal has not yet been lost, and could readily be revived. Stalin's immediate missionary activity in his share of Poland suggests that this possibility should not be ignored. This means that the Balkans and Czechoslovakia, as well as Poland, would be the objects of Russian attentions. The Pan-Slav idea coincides with another which is inherent in Russian minds—the elemental desire of northern peoples for a place on the warm sea. I do not believe that Stalin made a deal with Hitler merely to get a slice of Poland—or to enable Hitler to take another slice of Poland! And, whatever the nature of the bargain, I am certain that the first man to regret it will be Hitler.

It must gall Hitler every time he looks at the map. It is all very well for his propaganda to accuse England of inventing his desire for eastern expansion—we only got that idea from *Mein Kampf*. Now the Ukraine is apparently irretrievably lost—even that portion of it which was Austrian prior to 1918. Access even to Roumania is cut. *With an unfriendly Russia, Germany's strategic position is to-day less favourable than ever before.*

Most people who know the two men consider Stalin as likely to get the better of any deal. The division of Poland may be a trial of strength. Since the purely Polish core of the country has been cut roughly in two, it is obvious that neither Hitler nor Stalin will be permanently satisfied. If Stalin had taken the purely Russian fringe, then there could have been no prospect of quarrel with Germany. Instead

he has advanced to a common frontier, with an irridenta of millions of Poles inside Germany. Similarly, Hitler can consider that he has an irridenta of millions of Poles inside Russia, to be redeemed in due course. There are grounds for a pretty quarrel here—and more misery for the Poles.

To-day Stalin is credited with Machiavellian policies of staggering immensity. He incited Hitler to war by his pact, it is argued: he will support him for a long time—until Britain and France are nearly exhausted. Then he will step in and crush Hitler, creating a communist Germany. Britain and France will be so weakened that they in turn will be unable to resist the flow of communism.

This is one of those ideas which look very well on paper. It may not be entirely fantastic. Economically we *shall* be weakened, even exhausted, by a long war. Yet such a scheme takes insufficient heed of the resilient force of national character, far more strongly developed in the west than in the east.

The policy of Italy is still undecided. There is no sane reason why Mussolini should follow Hitler. If he wishes to join in the game of power politics, his obvious course is to wait until the struggle is ending: then France, whether winning or losing, is bound to be exhausted and less strongly placed to resist his demands. If he chooses to remain neutral, Italy may gain economically and would certainly gain morally.

## IX

I suggest that we should even now begin to consider the terms of the new peace. I also suggest that the war should end with a prolonged armistice, and that terms of peace should not be decided in the embittered atmosphere of the battlefield.

At the moment there is no hatred of the German people—though this will develop as the war wages its course. There

is a feeling that the men primarily responsible for the war should be punished. This is a far simpler proposition than it was in 1918, for any world jury would unhesitatingly lay the blame on the shoulders of a dozen men.

Yet the real aim of the peace treaty would not be punishment, but the ensuring that this can never happen again. The "war to end war" idea was unfortunately overlooked in 1918. It will not be easy to engender the right atmosphere. To-day opinion in the Allied countries is moderate, but it is bound to be hardened by the callous buffetings of war.

The war may end in one of three ways. (a) Britain and France may be defeated. Since our fate under Hitler's domination would be appalling to contemplate, it is certain that we should never capitulate until beaten to our knees. In view of our vast resources, this is extremely unlikely, to say the least.

(b) The war may be abandoned as a draw as both sides near exhaustion. In such case the main outstanding question is the future of Poland.

(c) The Allies may win decisively, as in 1918—either by military or economic pressure, or assisted by Russia, or aided by dissension inside Germany. In such case we shall be in a position to dictate terms. The position of Russia is likely to provide our greatest difficulty: maybe I ought now to class Russia as Danger Spot number one—at least, a forecast of her future policy is the greatest of Europe's problems.

I suggest that the first object of peace is the avoidance of future war. The armistice will give to Europe a unique opportunity of removing its danger spots. A peace which merely brought us back to the *status quo* of 1938, with a defeated and resentful Germany added, merely invites another conflict in fifteen years' time. Half a generation is a dangerous period: fifteen years the bearable limit of despair. In 1815 the Treaty of Vienna was signed: 1830

saw half of Europe in revolt. In 1870 France was beaten—and 1885 saw the rise of Boulanger, who might have become the Hitler of his day. In 1918 Germany was defeated—and 1933 saw Hitler installed as chancellor of Germany. The reaction is the same in each case—a movement of youth brought up in an atmosphere of resentment. We must watch the immediate post-war years.

I continue to emphasize my five-year armistice, to be followed by a general settlement. I would now advance exchange of populations boldly as a practical and essential policy.

Nor do I abandon my final formula. The peoples of Europe failed to prevent war because they did not impose their wishes on their leaders. It is quite possible that they may end the war: the lesson once learned, it is not unreasonable to hope that they will preserve the peace.



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